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HONORÉ DE BALZAC

VOL. I.

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de Balzac

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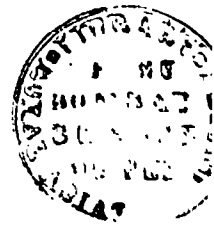
THE CORRESPONDENCE

OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

WITH A MEMOIR BY HIS SISTER

MADAME DE SURVILLE

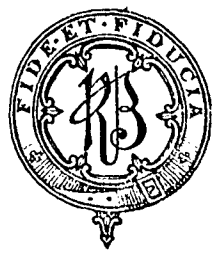


TRANSLATED BY C. LAMB KENNEY

With Portrait and Facsimile of the Handwriting of Balzac

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.



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MEMOIRS AND LETTERS

OF

BALZAC.

INTRODUCTION.

BY MADAME LAURA SURVILLE.

NOTE.—The Editor thinks that the best Introduction which could be prefixed to Balzac's Letters is this biographical notice, written and published by his sister, Madame Laura Surville, some time after the death of her brother.

THE characteristics of the parents have so much influence over the moral and physical condition of their children, that some account of our father and mother is necessary, for it will explain many things in the early life of my brother.

My father was born, in 1746, in Languedoc. He was *avocat* in the Council under Louis XVI. His position brought him into relations with many of the remarkable personages of that day, and also with some of the men who became famous during

the Revolution. These intimacies with both parties enabled him in 1793 to save more than one of his old friends and patrons. These services involved him in some danger; but an influential member of the Convention, who took an interest in *Citoyen Balzac*, lost no time in removing him from Robespierre's remembrance by despatching him to the North, to organise the commissariat of the army.

Thrown thus into the employment of the War Department, my father remained in it, and at the period of his marriage (1797) he was still attached to the commissariat of the twenty-second military division. He married the daughter of the head of his department, who was also the director of the hospitals in Paris.

My father resided for nineteen years at Tours, where he purchased a house standing in its own grounds.

After he had been ten years resident he was offered the mayoralty; but he declined this honour because it would have interfered with his duties as director of the great hospital at Tours, of which he had undertaken the charge.

My father seemed to have inherited his originality, humour, and benevolence from Montaigne, Rabelais, and 'Uncle Toby.' Like 'Uncle Toby'

he had a hobby. With my father this was health. He was so happy and comfortable himself, that he desired to live as long as he possibly could. He had calculated that, according to the years required for a man to reach his prime, the years of his life ought to be a hundred, or even more. In order to attain to the utmost, he took extraordinary care of himself, and paid unceasing attention to the preservation of what he called 'the equilibrium of the vital powers.'

After his marriage he had an additional reason for wishing to live as long as possible; for at the age of forty-five, being then unmarried and not contemplating marriage, he sunk the greater portion of his money in annuities, partly in Government securities, and partly in the Lafarge tontine, which was just then instituted, and to the funds of which he was one of the largest subscribers. Owing to waste and mismanagement it did not yield as it ought to have done; still when he died in 1829, at the age of eighty-three, from the effects of an accident, he was drawing an income of twelve thousand francs per annum, and he was very sanguine that he would survive all his companions, and share with Government the immense capital of the tontine.

Under all losses and reverses he used to say,

'Lafarge will one day make up for all;' and he was constantly exhorting his family to take care of their health, in order that they might enjoy the millions he would be sure to leave behind him.

The originality of his sayings and doings was proverbial in Tours. He could neither say nor do anything like other people; Hoffmann would have adopted him into his fantastic stories.

My father was often bitterly sarcastic. He used to say that mankind work incessantly to bring about their own misfortunes; and he could never see a deformed or very ugly person without grieving bitterly, indignant that governments should bestow so much more pains upon improving the breed of animals than upon ameliorating the moral and physical conditions of the human race.

'But what,' he would exclaim, as he paced up and down the room in his fine silk dressing-gown, with his head sunk in the folds of the enormous cravat—a fashion which he retained from the Directory—'what is the good of saying all this? People will only say I am eccentric [an epithet which made him furious]; and there will be never a rickety etiolated creature born the less! Human nature is incorrigible; and yet the creature always young, always old, goes on for ever—fortunately

for us and for our successors,' he would add with a smile.

He did not, however, mock at humanity when there was an opportunity to be of use to those who needed help.

Epidemics were not unfrequent in the hospital. At the time when it was crowded by the soldiers who were returning from Spain, a severe epidemic broke out. My father then took up his abode in the hospital; and, forgetting all about his own health, he watched over the sick, displaying a zeal which, coming from him, might truly be termed devotion.

He succeeded in putting an end to many abuses, without taking any heed to the enmities to which this sort of conduct gives rise. He also introduced many improvements into this hospital.

My father was never at a loss for a reply. One day some one was reading to him an article in a newspaper about a centenarian. He interrupted the reader to exclaim with enthusiasm—

'Ah! that man lived wisely; he did not squander his health and strength in all manner of excesses, like the imprudent young men of our day.' On reading further, however, it appeared that this wise and prudent-living man used fre-

quently to get drunk, and that he ate supper every night—which my father considered was one of the greatest enormities which could be committed against health. When my father heard this he said calmly, 'That man shortened his life; that is all.'

My mother—young, beautiful, and much younger than her husband—was endowed with rare brilliancy of wit and imagination; she possessed indefatigable activity, great firmness and decision of character, and her devoted attachment to her children and friends knew no bounds.

My brother was born at Tours, May 16, 1799, on the day of St. Honorius. This name pleased my father, who bestowed it on his son, although there had been no precedent for it in the family on either side.

My mother had lost her first child in the endeavour to suckle it herself. An excellent nurse was found for the little Honoré. She resided near the gate of the town, in a good, well-ventilated house, surrounded by gardens. Here he throve so well that, when I came into the world, I also was committed to her care; and Honoré remained with her until he was four years old, when we returned to the home of our parents together. The excellent health of Honoré preserved my

mother from all those anxieties which generally take the shape of over-indulgence. Children in those days were not made of the importance which is the fashion now; they were kept in the background, and taught to be respectful and obedient to their parents.

Mdlle. Delahaye, who had the charge of us, was possibly a little too strict on this point, for she inspired us with fear of our parents as well as respect. My brother long retained a vivid recollection of the terrors that used to seize us when we were taken to say 'Good morning' to our mother, and when we had to go into her sitting-room in the evening to say 'Good night.' Although these ceremonies were repeated every day, they never ceased to be awful. To be sure my mother on these occasions professed to read upon our faces the faults we had committed during the day (of which, of course, she had been informed); and these faults always brought upon us her severe reprimands, for she alone punished or rewarded us. Honoré was neither transformed into a prodigy nor yet flattered at the age when children only judge the love of their parents by smiles and caresses. If he early showed any of the traits which afterwards distinguished him, nobody remarked on them nor remembered

them. He was a lovely and charming child. His bright humour; his beautifully formed mouth, which always smiled; his large brown eyes, at once soft and sparkling; his fine forehead and rich, black hair, attracted admiring remarks from all who passed us in our daily walks.

Honoré was the eldest; after him came two sisters and a brother. Our youngest sister died young, after she had been married five years. Our other brother went to the colonies, where he married and settled.

When Honoré was born, there was every promise that his prospects in life would be excellent. The fortune of our mother, and that of our maternal grandmother, who came, after the death of her husband, to reside with us, together with the emoluments and annuities of my father, made up a large income for our family.

My mother devoted herself entirely to our education; but as she thought fit to exercise great strictness, which was almost severity, towards us, to neutralise what she considered the over-indulgence of our father and grandmother, this austerity on the part of my mother had the effect of repressing the tender, expansive nature of Honoré, whilst the age and gravity of my father made my brother in those early days feel reserved

towards him. This state of things, however, strengthened and intensified the bond of affection between Honoré and myself. Brotherly love was certainly the earliest sentiment in his heart. I was only two years his junior, and stood exactly in the same relation towards our parents; brought up together, we loved each other tenderly. He was good to me ever since I can remember anything. I shall never forget the quickness with which he once ran to save me from falling down three steep, unequal steps which led from our nurse's room into the garden. His affectionate protection continued the same when we returned to our father's house. Many were the times when he let himself be punished for my faults without ever betraying my guilt. When I happened to come up in time to take the blame on myself, he would say—

'Another time, do not own to anything. I like to be scolded instead of you.'

One never forgets such traits of innocent self-devotion.

A fortunate concurrence of circumstances preserved our friendship on its early footing. We always continued to live near each other, in an unchanged affection and an unreserved intimacy. I have always known the joys and sorrows of

my brother, and I never lost the privilege of sharing them. The certainty of all I was able to be to him is my great consolation now that he is no more.

When Honoré became of an age to understand and appreciate his father, the latter was a handsome old man, still strong and energetic, with courteous manners, seldom speaking of himself, full of indulgence for the young, in whom he delighted, leaving to everyone the freedom he desired for himself. His judgment was sound and upright; and, in spite of his eccentricities, his temper was so equal, and his nature so sweet, that he made everybody happy who lived with him. His highly cultivated intellect made him watch with delight the progress of science and of social improvements, of which he foresaw from their commencement their influence upon the future. My father's earnest conversations and curious histories gave his son an insight into the science of life, and furnished the groundwork of more than one of his works.

The great event of my brother's childhood was a journey to Paris. My mother took him there in 1804, to present him to his grandparents. They were enchanted with their lovely grandchild, and loaded him with caresses and presents.

Little accustomed to be made much of, Honoré returned home with his head full of delightful recollections, and with his heart filled with love for these charming grandparents, of whom he talked to me without ceasing, and did his best to describe, not omitting their house, their beautiful garden, and above all 'Mouche,' the great watch-dog, with whom he had been especially intimate. This visit to Paris served to fill his imagination for a long time. Some months after this visit Honoré's brown silk vest and its beautiful light-blue sash were taken away, and he was dressed in mourning instead. His dear grandpapa had died suddenly in a fit of apoplexy. It was his first grief. He cried bitterly when they told him he would never see his grandfather more; and the remembrance remained so fixed in his mind that long after this sorrowful day, seeing me once seized with laughter that I could not control when my mother was giving me a reprimand, he came up to me, and, by way of putting a stop to this boisterous laughter, which was beginning to make me ill, he whispered in a tragical tone—

'Think of the death of grandpapa.'

Hitherto what I have said of the early years of Honoré reveals rather his goodness than his intelligence. I recollect, however, that he used to

display his imagination in those childish games that George Sand so well describes in her 'Memoirs.' My brother used to invent and improvise little plays, which used to amuse us greatly; and he used for hours together to scrape the strings of a little red violin. His face, radiant with delight, showed that he, at least, felt that he was listening to melodies. He was much astonished whenever I entreated him to put an end to this music, which would have set Mouche howling.

'You do not understand how beautiful it is,' he would reply.

Like most children, he used to be passionately fond of fairy tales. They no doubt inspired him with other stories; for sometimes, after a long continuance of bewildering chatter, he would fall into long periods of silence, which at that time were set down to fatigue, but which might also be reveries in the world of imagination.

When my brother was seven years old he ceased to be a day scholar at Tours, and was sent to the College of Vendôme, which at that time had a high reputation. He remained seven years at this college, which gave no holidays.

We used to go to visit him every year at Easter, when there was the distribution of prizes. He was seldom successful in these competitions,

and he received more reproach than praise during those days to which he had looked forward with so much delight.

The remembrance of this period inspired the first part of his book 'Louis Lambert.' In this first part Louis Lambert and Balzac are one in two persons. College life, with the events of every day—what he suffered, what he thought—are all true—even to the incident of the Treatise on the Will, which one of the professors flung into the fire without reading, in his rage at finding that, instead of what he had ordered. My brother always regretted the loss of this manuscript—it was a specimen of what he was at that period of his life.

He was fourteen years of age when M. Mareschal, the director of the college, wrote to my mother, between Easter and the prize day, desiring her to come instantly to take away her son. He had fallen into a state of coma, which alarmed the masters all the more that they could form no conjecture about the cause. They had always considered my brother an idle scholar, so they were far from attributing his cerebral attack to the fatigue of over-work.

Honoré had become thin and poor-looking; he was like those somnambulists who sleep with

their eyes open. He did not hear half that was said to him, and could not have replied if he had been abruptly asked, 'Where are you? What are you thinking about?'

None of us ever forgot the astonishment of the whole family at the sight of Honoré when my mother brought him home from Vendôme.

'So!' cried my grandmother dolefully, 'this is the condition in which the College gives us back the pretty boys we have sent there!'

My father, who at first was very uneasy at the condition of his son, was soon reassured when he saw that change of scene, plenty of fresh air, and the healthy influence of family intercourse began to restore the vivacity and gaiety of adolescence, which was then commencing for him.

This curious condition, which he afterwards accounted for, arose, to use his own words, from a congestion of ideas. Unknown to the professors, he had read through most of the books in the rich library of the college, collected by the learned oratorians who were the founders and proprietors of this enormous institution, where three hundred pupils were received. It was in the place of solitary confinement to which he contrived to be committed every day that he had read these solid works, which developed his

mind at the expense of his body, just at the age when the physical powers need to be exercised at least as much as those of the intellect.

The classification of the ideas thus obtained took place gradually in his powerful memory, wherein he was already storing up the incidents and characters that passed before him.

These recollections served him in later years for those wonderful 'Scènes de la Vie de Province.'

Moved inwardly towards a vocation he did not as yet understand, he was led instinctively and unconsciously to studies and observations which were to prepare him for his future labours and to impart to them their rich fertility.

He amassed materials without knowing the purpose they were destined to serve.

Some of the types in 'La Comédie humaine' date from this period.

During the long walks which my mother insisted upon, he began to see and admire with the eyes of an artist the soft and beautiful scenery of his beloved Touraine, which he afterwards described so well.

He would stand silently to watch the splendid sunsets lighting up the Gothic towers of Tours, the villages scattered on all sides, and the majestic

Loire covered with sailing vessels, great and small.

My mother, however, desired he should take exercise instead of falling into reveries, and she obliged him to help our young brother fly his kite, or to run races with me and my sister. He then forgot all about the beauty of the landscape, and became the youngest and the gayest of the four children who surrounded my mother.

She took us every saints' day to the Cathedral of St. Gatien, and there Honoré could dream as much as he pleased. None of the poetry or splendour of this fine building were lost upon him. He remembered everything—the wonderful effects of light as it streamed through the old glass windows; the clouds of incense which enveloped those who swung the censers; and all the majestic ceremonial of the service, which was made still more splendid by the presence of the Cardinal Archbishop.

The physiognomies of the priests, which he studied on those occasions, enabled him in after days to create the Abbés Birotteau and Lorau; and the Curé Bonnet, whose tranquil soul is so finely in contrast with the remorse of the repentant Veronica.

This cathedral made so profound an impression upon my brother's mind, that the mere name

of 'St. Gatien' always awoke in him worlds of recollections in which the pure fresh feelings of early youth and religious sentiments (which he never lost) were mingled with the manly thoughts which were even then taking shape in that powerful brain.

He was attended by various masters at home, and followed with them the course of college study.

He began to say that one day he would make the world talk of him; and these expressions, at which everybody laughed, became the source of constant raillery. In the name of this future celebrity he had to endure a great deal of teasing—little pricks and stings, the prelude of more severe ones in after life. The apprenticeship was not without its use.

He took all our jokes in good part (he was always laughing in those happy days). Never was there a more lovable creature; but also there never was anyone who earlier developed the desire to become celebrated, or the intuitive certainty that he would attain success.

Those around him, however, were very far from encouraging or cultivating these ideas. My brother, as I have said, was under a feeling of restraint before our parents; he thought more

than he spoke when in their presence. They, not knowing the cause of this, shared the opinion of his masters, who saw in him nothing but a very commonplace boy, who needed much urging on to make him learn his Greek and Latin lessons.

Our mother, who paid more attention to him than anyone, was so far from suspecting what her eldest son really was, or what he promised one day to become, that she set down to accident the sagacious remarks and reflections which sometimes escaped him.

'You certainly do not know what you are talking about, Honoré,' she would say on these occasions.

He would only reply by the sweet, subtle smile peculiar to him. This eloquent though silent protest provoked my mother when she happened to see it, and she called it arrogance and presumption.

Honoré never ventured to defend himself to her, nor to explain the meaning either of his smile or of his ideas.

Towards the close of 1814 my father was called to Paris to undertake the direction of the commissariat of the first military division.

Honoré continued his studies under M. Lepitre,

of the Rue Saint-Louis, and MM. Sganzer and Beuzelin, of the Rue Thorigny, in the Marais, where we resided. Honoré did not distinguish himself here, any more than he had done at the Colleges of Tours and Vendôme.

When it came to making his essays in rhetoric, he began to perceive and become enamoured of the beauties of the French language.

I have preserved one of his competition pieces, 'The Speech of the Wife of Brutus to her Husband after the Condemnation of his Sons.' The grief of the mother is given with great power, and there was already promise of the faculty which my brother possessed of entering into the heart of his characters.

When he was seventeen and a half his course of study in class terminated, and in 1816 he returned home for the third time.

My mother, who considered industry the foundation of all education, understood thoroughly the value of time: she did not allow her son to be a moment idle.

He received lessons in the branches of learning which had been neglected in college, and he followed the courses of lectures at the Sorbonne.

I remember well his enthusiasm about the bril-

liant lectures of Villemain, Guizot, Cousin. It was with a sort of passion that he tried to make us understand and share his own delight in all he heard. He went to read in the public libraries, to be able the better to enter into the instruction of the illustrious professors.

During his peregrinations at this period through the Quartier Latin he bought, in old book shops on the quays, many rare and valuable works, which even then he knew how to choose. These formed the nucleus of that splendid collection of books which his constant relations with booksellers rendered in time complete. Originally it had been his intention to bequeath this collection of books to his native city; but his fellow-citizens wounded his feelings so deeply by the indifference they manifested whenever he visited Tours, that he altered his intention.[1]

My father wished Honoré to go through a course of legal study for three years with an *avoué* and a notary, and to pass all the examinations, in

[1] M. Brun, prefect in 1856 of the Indre-et-Loire, an old companion of my brother at the College of Vendôme, in concert with M. Mame, Mayor of Tours, brother of the well-known publisher who published Balzac's early works, placed an inscription over the house where the author of the 'Comédie humaine' was born; it was not, however, the house in which he passed his childhood. The house, which was my father's, belonged in 1856 to the Comtesse d'Outremont, a friend of our family.

order to obtain a thorough knowledge of all the forms, proceedings, and meanings of the practice of law. He used to say that the education of no man could be complete unless he were acquainted with the forms of ancient and modern legislation, more especially with those of his own country.

Honoré accordingly entered the office of our friend M. de Merville. M. Scribe had just quitted it. After remaining eighteen months with this *avoué*, he was received by M. Passez, a notary, with whom he remained for the like period. M. Passez was one of our intimate friends, and lived in the house where we were residing. This will account for the minute fidelity of Balzac's descriptions of the interior of lawyers' offices, and of the great legal knowledge he evinces. I once found his book 'César Birotteau' in the office of a lawyer in Paris. It was placed on the shelves along with standard works on the law, and the lawyer assured me it was an excellent book of reference in matters of bankruptcy.

My brother in those days worked very hard; for, in addition to his *cours de droit* and the work which his employers gave him to do, he had also to prepare for his successive examinations. However, his industry, his memory, and his facility for work were so great that he still found time to spend his

evenings at the whist or boston table of my grandmother, where this dear and excellent woman always forced him to be a winner, by means of her own mistakes made for the purpose. The money thus gained he devoted to buying books. He always loved these games, in memory of her; he used to recall her words and ways, and one of them unexpectedly remembered always seemed to him a happiness snatched from the grave.

Sometimes my brother used to accompany us to balls; but having one night an ignominious fall, in spite of the lessons he had received from one of the ballet-masters of the Opera, he renounced dancing for ever, so keenly did he feel the smiles from the women which followed his disaster. After that he became merely a spectator at these amusements, and in later days he turned the recollection of them to use. At the age of twenty-one he had terminated his legal studies and passed all his examinations. My father unfolded to him his plans for the future, which would have enabled Honoré to make a fortune: but a fortune was just then the thing he cared the least about.

My father had in former days materially assisted a man, whom he met with again in 1814 as a notary in Paris.

This man was very grateful, and wished to

repay to the son the benefit he had received from the father. He offered to take Honoré into his office, and to let him have the whole of his practice, after a few years of probation, on advantageous terms. But to my brother the idea of being bowed down for possibly ten years under the drudgery of drawing up marriage contracts, inventories, bills of sale, &c., was unbearable—he, who was then secretly dreaming of literary fame!

He was struck dumb with dismay on hearing this grand revelation of my father's project. He frankly expressed his own wishes for his future course, and then it was my father who was dumb with astonishment.

A warm discussion ensued. Honoré warmly controverted the powerful reasons which were brought against his own plan, and his looks, words, and manner of speaking revealed such a conviction of his own vocation that my father at length granted him two years in which to give proofs of his talent.

This fine opportunity, which he thus allowed to escape, explains the severity with which he was treated by his family. Also it accounts for the hatred he felt against the whole body of notaries—a detestation which is very apparent in some of his works.

My father did not yield without much reluctance, which was augmented by several vexations about money matters. He had just been obliged to retire from his post on a pension; also he had lost money in two speculations. In short, we were all to go to reside, on a reduced income, at a country house he had purchased about six leagues from Paris.

Fathers and mothers will easily understand the anxieties felt by my parents under the circumstances. My brother had given, as yet, no proof of his literary talent; and, as his fortune was all to make, it seemed only rational to wish him to follow a less precarious occupation than that of a writer for the press. For one individual who, like Honoré, so magnificently vindicated his own faith in his self-chosen career, how many mediocrities have been thrown upon evil days by a similar yielding on the part of their parents! My father's condescension to his son's wishes did not fail to be treated as weakness, and he was much blamed by all who knew us. 'My brother was going to lose precious time. What could the profession of literature ever do for him? At the best it would never lead to fortune; and then, had Honoré the making of a man of genius in him?' Everybody doubted it greatly. It may be imagined what they would

have said had my father confided to them the opportunity that had been offered to him on his behalf.

One of our friends, who was rather brusque and very positive, declared that Honoré was fit only for the situation of a copying clerk. The unfortunate youth 'wrote a beautiful hand'—quoting the words of his writing-master when he left college—and he advised my father to place him in some public office where, with his interest, Honoré might soon be in a position to support himself.

My father judged otherwise of his son; and, having faith in his own theories and believing in the intelligence of his children, he only smiled at the vehemence of his friend, and remained firm.

My mother felt less confidence than my father; but she thought that a little poverty and difficulty would soon bring Honoré to submission.

Accordingly, before we left Paris, she installed him in a garret, which he had chosen himself, near the library of the Arsenal, the only one he did not know, and in which he intended to work. She furnished it with only the strictest necessaries—a bed, a table, and a few chairs. The nominal allowance which she proposed to give him was so small that it certainly would not, with the most rigorous economy, have sufficed for his wants if

my mother had not charged an old woman, who for twenty years had been in the service of our family, to watch over him secretly. It is this old woman whom in his letters he calls 'l'Iris messagère.'

The transition from a home where everything was abundant, to the solitude of a garret destitute of every comfort, was certainly hard. He did not, however, complain of the small nook where he found his liberty, and to which he carried the fervid hopes which his first literary disappointments could not extinguish.

It was at this period that the following correspondence began. The familiar jestings in the first fragments which I quote may seem trivial; but I must not suppress them, because they illustrate in a remarkable manner the inner nature of my brother, and it is interesting to follow the gradual development of a mind like his. In his first letter, after enumerating the expenses of housekeeping details—given only to let my mother see that he was already wanting money—he confides to me that he has engaged a servant.

'A servant! but are you in earnest, my 'brother?

'Yes, a servant. He has a name as droll as 'that of the Doctor's servant, who is called Quiet.

'Mine is called Myself (*Moi-même*). A bad 'bargain, truly. Moi-même is idle, clumsy, 'thoughtless. His master is hungry, is thirsty, 'and sometimes he has provided neither bread 'nor water for him. He does not even know how 'to keep out the wind which whistles through the 'door and the window like Tulou through his 'flute, but not so pleasantly.'

In his second letter he apologises for his former one, which our mother had thought carelessly written.

'Tell *maman* I work so hard that writing to 'you is my relaxation. Besides—without offence 'be it said—I go along like Sancho Panza's ass, 'browsing on all that comes in my road. I never 'make a rough copy (the heart knows nothing of 'rough copies). If I do not put in my stops, if I 'do not read over what I have written, it is that 'you may read my letter again, and so be obliged 'to think of me longer. I will fling my pen to 'dumb beasts if that is not a touch of finesse 'worthy of a woman!'

What numberless works he was at that period revolving in his brain! Romances, comedies, comic operas, tragedies, are on his list of the works that he was going to write. He was like a child who is so eager to talk that he does not know where

to begin. 'Stella' and 'Coqsigrue' are two of the first books he is going to write. Neither of them ever saw the light. Amongst the comedies that he contemplated writing at this time I recollect one called 'The Two Philosophers,' which he would certainly have resumed in his leisure times. These two philosophers mock at each other, and quarrel together 'just like friends,' as my brother said when speaking of this play.

Whilst both of these philosophers were pretending to despise the honours and pleasures of the world they struggle against each other to obtain them; they both fail: their respective failure reconciles them, and they unite in abusing the detestable race of human beings.

It is impossible to guess for which of his books he wanted our father's copy of Tacitus, the edition of which was not in the Arsenal library. It is the subject of his third letter.

'It is absolutely necessary that I should have 'my father's copy of Tacitus. He does not want 'it now that he is China, or in the Bible.'

My father was enthusiastic about the Chinese (possibly because they are, as a people, so long-lived). He was at that time reading the ponderous works of the Jesuit missionaries, who were the first to describe China; he was also making notes

on some valuable editions of the Bible which he possessed. It was a book which always called forth his admiration.

My father, with a view to spare his son from mortification in case he should fail in his hopes, gave it out that he was away from Paris. It was also a method of keeping him clear of worldly temptations.

M. Villiers, of whom my brother speaks in one of his letters from Switzerland, was a very old friend of our family. He was an ancient Abbé Comte de Lyon, and had retired to Nogent, a little village situated near l'Ile Adam. My brother went to stay with him several times: the witty conversation of this good old man, his curious anecdotes of the old Court, wherein he had been a distinguished personage, and the encouragement he gave my brother, whose confidant he was, had caused so strong an affection on both sides, that Honoré in after days used to call l'Ile Adam '*son paradis inspirateur*.'

After much hesitation 'Cromwell' was the subject he chose for his first appearance in literature. It was to be a classical tragedy.

'I have chosen Cromwell because he is the 'finest subject in modern history. Since I began 'to meditate on the subject, I have flung myself

'into it body and soul; ideas throng upon me, but 'I am constantly stopped by my want of skill in 'versification. I shall have bitten all my nails to 'the quick before I have completed this first 'monument of my genius. If you only could 'understand all the difficulties of these works! 'The great Racine spent two whole years in 'polishing and finishing "Phèdre," that despair of 'poets. Two years! two years! Do you realise 'all those words mean?—two years!'

His hopes began to be often mixed with fears.

'Ah, sister, what tortures I endure! I shall 'petition the Pope to give me the first martyr's 'niche which becomes vacant. I have just dis- 'covered a defect in the construction of my 'regicide play, and it swarms throughout with 'bad verses. I feel to-day that I am a real *pater* '*doloroso*.'

He sent me the plan of his tragedy in the strictest confidence; he intended to surprise the rest of the family when it should be finished. At the top of his letter was written, 'For yourself 'alone.'

'It is not a small gift nor a slight proof of 'friendship I am giving you, in thus permitting 'you to assist at the birth of genius (laugh if you

'feel inclined). As at present this is only a plan, I 'have left a margin on the paper, upon which you 'can write your own sublime observations.

'But, in spite of this great privilege, I expect 'that your ladyship will read with due respect this 'plan of Sophocles the younger.

'Only to think that one may read in an hour 'what it has required whole years to write!'

Many months passed in this work. He was constantly writing to me in alternations of hope and fear.

Graver thoughts began to mingle with his juvenile gaiety.

'I have exchanged the Jardin des Plantes for 'Père la Chaise. The Jardin des Plantes is too 'melancholy. During my walks in Père la Chaise 'I find many good consoling and inspiring reflec- 'tions, and I have made there studies of sorrow 'which will be useful in "Cromwell." True sorrow 'is so difficult to describe; it requires so much 'simplicity.

'The only good epitaphs are those contained 'in a name—La Fontaine—Masséna—Molière— 'one single name—which says everything and 'makes one ponder over it.'

He, too, ponders over those great men of whom, during their lifetime, the world thought

nothing, and understood neither their ideas nor their works, and his heart grew pitiful over them.

'Mediocrity will always find consolation in the 'biography of great men.'

He especially enjoyed standing upon the height whence there is a view over the whole of Paris. It is on this spot that Rastignac seats himself after he has paid the last duties to 'le père Goriot.' Balzac himself lies buried here. He often questioned, when thinking of the illustrious dead who lay sleeping round him, whether a day would come when his grave also would be visited. In the days when he felt hopeful, he would exclaim, like Rastignac—

'This world is mine, because I understand it!'

Then he would return home to his garret, 'where it was as dark as an oven, and where, without me, nobody would see anything.'

Like his own Desplein in 'La Messe de l'Athée,' he complains that the oil for his lamp costs more than his bread; but he never tired of his garret.

'The time I may spend here will always be a 'source of pleasant recollections. To live after my 'own fashion—to work according to my inclination 'and in my own way—to do nothing when so

'disposed—to dream of the future, which I 'always make beautiful—to think of you, know-'ing you to be happy—to have for my mis-'tress the Julie of Rousseau; La Fontaine and 'Molière for my friends; Racine for a master; and 'Père la Chaise for my daily walk. Ah, if this 'would only last for ever!'

The opinion of the friend who thought him fit for nothing but to be 'a copying clerk' sometimes troubled his mind; then he would exclaim indignantly—

'I will give that man the lie!'

When he had at length proved this friend's judgment wrong, the only revenge he took was to dedicate to him one of his finest works.

Neither did he forget the satirical smiles with which the women had greeted his tumble at the ball, and he vowed to make them smile upon him after another fashion.

These thoughts redoubled his ardour for work. Small circumstances often lead to great results; they do not create a vocation, but they spur the man on to follow it.

There was another letter sufficiently remarkable for me to remember; it was evidently written for my mother, and it was no doubt given to her, as it is missing from my collection. In it

he begins dimly to discern the different horizons of social life, and the obstacles which in every career a man must encounter and overcome before he can make his way through the crowd which is struggling in the same direction, and blocking up the road. He does not dissimulate the difficulties of the literary profession, but he argues that difficulties exist everywhere; therefore why should not a man be left free to follow the vocation for which he feels an irresistible attraction? That was the moral of the letter.

I will transcribe one last fragment of this correspondence dated from his garret; it was written in April 1820, and is curious as showing his lucid insight into things around him.

'I am more engrossed than ever with my 'career, for many reasons, but I will only mention 'those which it is possible you may not have per- 'ceived. Our revolutions are far from being at 'an end, and, from the way things are going on, I 'foresee a great many more storms in the future.

'Whether it be good or bad, the representa- 'tive system requires immense talent; and great 'writers will be called for in all times of political 'crisis, for do they not unite to their literary faculty 'the spirit of observation and a profound know- 'ledge of human nature? If I became a *gaillard*,

'(which is by no means certain), I may some 'day achieve the title of "great citizen" as well as 'that of a great writer. It is an ambition one '"may lawfully indulge."'

The scene was now about to change, and his first disappointments were to take the place of his early anticipations.

Towards the end of April 1820, my brother returned to his father's house with his tragedy completed.

He was in high spirits. He felt so assured of his triumph that he requested some of our friends might be invited to hear him read 'Cromwell,' more especially that friend whose judgment of him had been so disparaging.

The friends arrived, and the solemn ordeal began.

The enthusiasm of the reader cooled visibly as he went on, and began to feel that he made no impression on the frozen and downcast faces of those who were listening.

'Cromwell' was not to be his 'revenge' upon M. ——, who, abrupt as usual, gave his opinion of the tragedy in no measured terms. Honoré did not accept his judgment, but the others who had heard the work read were agreed,

although they spoke more gently, in considering it 'very imperfect.'

My father listened to all that was said, and he proposed that 'Cromwell' should be submitted to a competent judge. M. Surville, the engineer of the Canal de l'Ourcq, who was about to become Honoré's brother-in-law, proposed his old professor of the Ecole Polytechnique. My brother accepted this literary veteran as his sovereign judge.

The good old man, after reading it with conscientious care, declared that the writer might follow any profession he pleased, '*except that of literature.*'

Honoré received this judgment without flinching. He did not feel that he had been beaten.

'Tragedies are not in my line, that is all,' and he quietly returned to his labours.

Fifteen months of life in a garret had, however, made him so thin, that my mother insisted upon keeping him at home, where she watched over him with tender solicitude.

During the next five years, whilst thus at home, he wrote more than forty volumes. He considered them all as more or less imperfect attempts, and he published them under various pseudonymes, out of respect for the name of De Balzac, already

celebrated, and to which he wished to add fresh lustre. Mediocrity is not so modest.

I shall abstain from giving the titles of these early works, in obedience to his expressed desire.

In spite of the material comfort he enjoyed in his father's house, Honoré never ceased to regret his dear garret, where he had enjoyed the quiet and freedom he could not have in the bustling family circle, which, masters and servants included, amounted to ten persons, all in movement round him ; and even when he was at work he could not get away from the noise made by the wheels of the domestic machinery, which the vigilant and indefatigable mistress kept constantly in motion.

Eighteen months after he had been reinstated in his father's house, I was residing for a short time at Bayeux, and our correspondence recommenced.

My brother in the midst of his relatives speaks much more about them than about himself, and he speaks with the freedom that perfect confidence inspires.

In some of his letters there are scenes of domestic life and conversations which might have been pages from ' La Comédie humaine.'

In one of these letters he compares my father

to the pyramids of Egypt, motionless in the midst of the whirlwinds of the desert sand.

In another he tells me of the approaching marriage of my sister Laurentia. His portraits of her, of her *fiancé*, his description of the enthusiasm of the whole family for this second son-in-law, are all drawn with the hand of a master: he has already found the pen of Balzac.

The letter concludes with these lines:—

'We are all proud originals in our holy 'family. What a pity that I cannot put all of us 'into a novel!'

I shall only extract from these letters the passages that relate to my brother. In the following occurs his first attack of discouragement; as he advances in life he feels the difficulties of the way:—

'You ask me to give you details of the fête, 'and to-day I can feel only the sorrows of my 'heart. I am the most unhappy of all the unhappy 'wretches who live miserably under the sparkling 'celestial roof of the world which the Eternal has 'made so bright and built with His powerful hands.

'An account of fêtes! it is a sorrowful litany 'which I have to send you instead.'

In his next letter my brother announces his third and fourth novels.

'I send you two new works, which are still very bad and very inartistic. You will find 'in one of them some rather droll passages 'and some types of character, but a detestable 'plot.'

He certainly judged himself far too severely. These works contained, it is true, only the promise of his genius, but there was evidence of so much improvement in these latter works, that he might have signed his name to them without any detriment to his future reputation.

Happily for him his moods changed quickly, and he soon recovered from his fit of despondency. The next letters I received were full of exuberance and gaiety. His novels began to bring him in better payment, whilst at the same time they cost him less effort to write.

'If you only knew how little trouble it is to 'invent the plot of those stories, to give titles to 'the chapters, and to fill the sheets of blank paper 'which has to be written upon.'

At this time he was full of schemes and hopes for the future; he beheld himself as already become a rich and a married man. He began to desire to make a fortune, but only as the means to an end. He would describe the ideal wife he wished to find, and his thoughts about conjugal happiness

were certainly not those of a man who was considering 'La Physiologie du Mariage.'

To distract me from the depression of home-sickness, caused by the distance which separated me from my family, he would invent a thousand stories for me, scolding me for my low spirits, quoting from Rabelais, and finishing with the praises of 'Roger Bontemps.'

At another time he would tell me all the news of the village in a wild spirit running over with gaiety.

'Every neighbour complains of his neighbour,' and he makes dialogue and talk for all the characters.

Already he had become a seeker after secrets, an explorer of the human heart; delicate touches of criticism, subtle remarks, and wise reflections come to the surface in the midst of his gaiety. These witty chronicles excite laughter and betray that he already possessed that touch of Rabelaism which distinguished him from all other writers of his time.

'I am about to write to you to-day upon 'matters of the gravest importance. It is nothing 'less than to try to learn what people will think of 'us. You will perhaps fancy from this beginning 'that I am anxious to know what Bayeux, Caen,

'and the whole of Normandy think of my charming books ?. Well, yes, but the matter in hand is of much more importance than that! It is nothing less than an idea which my mother has taken into her head to come and pay you a visit, and here are the problems you must solve in your reply . . .'

He went to pay a visit to l'Ile Adam, and whilst there he attended the funeral of a medical man, such a one as he describes in the 'Médecin de Campagne.' This man, whom he had known during his previous visits, the benefactor of the country round, beloved and regretted by all, furnished him with the idea of this work.

This man, now dead, was to become one day the living M. Bénassis.

Wherever my brother went he studied towns, villages, country places, and all who inhabited them, gathering up the words which expressed a character or summed up a situation.

He gave the trivial name of his 'Larder' to the book in which he made notes of all the things that struck him.

But although for a short time Honoré had been lulled by hope, he was soon awakened from his dreams by stern realities. His novels not only did not make him rich, but they did not even

supply him with necessaries. The family was fast losing all faith in him, and began to talk of the necessity of taking some decided step.

That my brother should have succeeded in getting his books published at all, was in itself no inconsiderable success; it proved not only that his abilities were beyond those of ordinary men, but also that he possessed remarkable powers of fascination.

The publisher is an intractable personage for the poor beginner, who is usually bowed out of his presence with the disheartening phrase, 'You are quite unknown, and yet you ask me to publish your books.' How to become celebrated without having done anything is a problem difficult of solution, unless a man can come upon the battle-field of literature with the force of a ball fired from a cannon, and as yet my brother did not feel that his works had received this impelling force. He knew no one who could give him any help except an old college friend who had since become a magistrate, and who had written his first novel at the same time as my brother; no one else gave him any help or encouragement.

Fearing he might be constrained to accept for a permanence the fetters of dependence in which he was held so long as he continued under his

father's roof, and of which he felt ashamed, he resolved to undertake certain speculations, in the hope, if they succeeded, of gaining his liberty. It was in 1823, and my brother was then nearly five-and-twenty.

Now began a series of disasters which brought on the misfortunes of his after life. Few people are aware that my brother expended as much energy and intelligence in his struggles against misfortune as were required to produce 'La Comédie humaine,' the work which gained for him that celebrity which was the most ardent desire of his heart. Those who were in the secret of his life asked with pitiful wonder and reverence how any man could find the time, the physical endurance, and, above all, the moral strength of purpose sufficient to support such an enormous amount of hard and heavy work.

If only his modest request had been granted for an allowance of fifteen hundred francs until he had attained his first success, his family would have spared him many adversities, and themselves likewise. Energetic and patient, as true genius always is, he would have returned to his garret, where this income would have been sufficient for his wants. Extreme in his desires, he required

either a palace or a garret; he loved luxury, but he could do very well without it.

I will abridge the dry details of the events that followed as much as possible, but they are necessary to explain the misfortunes in which he became involved, and which are so little known that even his friends attributed his difficulties to foolish extravagances of which he was quite innocent.

When Honoré went to Paris at this period he went to lodgings which my father still held there. He became intimate with a neighbour, to whom he confided the annoyance and chagrin caused by his precarious position. This neighbour, a man of business, advised him to enter into some good speculation, which would set him free from his state of dependence, and lent him the money to undertake the same.

Balzac, thus transformed into a speculator, began as a publisher. He was the first who was struck with the idea of publishing compact editions of standard works, an idea which has since proved very profitable to booksellers. He published in one volume complete editions of the works of Molière and La Fontaine. He published both of these authors at the same time, because he was afraid that one would be snatched from him whilst he was busy upon the other.

These editions did not succeed, because he was a quite obscure person, and the rest of the trade refused either to buy or to receive his books for sale.

The sum that had been lent to him was quite insufficient to meet the expenses of the numerous advertisements which might have attracted purchasers. These editions remained entirely unknown, and a year after they came out my brother had not disposed of twenty copies.

In order to put an end to the expense of warehouse room for the books remaining on hand, where they lay piled up and completely buried, he sold them by weight for waste paper—that beautiful paper which it had cost him so dear to cover with print.

Instead of gaining any money by this first venture Honoré realised nothing but a debt. It was the first instalment of that experience which in later days gave him such an insight into men and things.

His next speculation was to become a printer. The same friend who had lent him money for the publishing business was anxious that my brother should take to some business which offered a chance of repairing the loss. He introduced Honoré to one of his relations, who had made a

large fortune as a printer. My brother received the best information on all points; he grew enthusiastic about printing. He wished to become a printer himself; there would be no necessity for him to give up writing books. He thought of Richardson, who became rich both as a printer and an author; he foresaw new 'Clarissas' issuing from his press.

My brother's creditor was quite satisfied with this project, and he undertook to obtain the consent of our parents. He succeeded. My father gave Honoré, as his portion of what fortune he might expect, the capital of the fifteen hundred francs which he had once asked for as an allowance to enable him to devote himself to literature.

Honoré took as a partner a young man who had attracted his notice when he was publishing his first novels. This young man was now married and the father of a family, and my brother felt interested in him; but unfortunately he could only contribute the practical knowledge, which my brother did not possess. Honoré imagined that the skill and zeal of his associate would be equivalent to his contribution to the capital.

A printing license cost dear in the days of Charles X.; and when the cost of the license was paid, the type and paper bought, there was very little money left in hand for working expenses.

The young printers installed themselves with sanguine hopes in the Rue des Marais, St. Germain. They accepted all orders that came in ; payments did not follow so readily, and the balance between in-comings and out-goings was not equal ; they soon began to be straightened for money.

About this time an opportunity offered itself for acquiring a type-foundry on excellent terms, which competent judges declared would be an excellent investment. Honoré did not hesitate to become the purchaser. He hoped by uniting the two concerns to find either a third partner or to be able to raise a loan. He made immense efforts, but he could obtain neither the one nor the other, because his first creditor had the first claim upon all there was to be had.

Bankruptcy was imminent. Honoré went through anguish of mind that he never forgot, and at length was obliged to have recourse once more to his own family.

My father and mother recognised the gravity of the crisis and came to his assistance. But after some months of continued sacrifice of money, and fearing lest they should be involved in ruin along with their son, they stopped short and refused to furnish any further funds at the very moment when things seemed to be coming round. Honoré

could not convince his parents of the almost certainty of success which he saw near at hand; he was obliged to make a forced sale of the whole concern. His difficulties were so well known, and the prices offered were so low that to accept them involved the loss of everything except the honour of his name. However, to avoid bankruptcy, which would have killed his old father and thrown a slight upon his own life, he gave the printing office and the foundry to one of his friends for the price that had been bid for them. He at least secured the prosperity of his friend, for his previsions were fully justified; there was a fortune in the foundry alone.

The proceeds of the sale were not sufficient to discharge all the debts connected with the concern. My mother advanced the money required. Honoré retired from the printing business burdened with many debts, and my mother figured in the list as the principal creditor.

It was now near the close of the year 1827. Our parents had sold their country place, and were residing near us at Versailles, where M. Surville was the engineer of the department of the Seine-et-Oise. Honoré was then nearly twenty-nine years of age. At that time he possessed nothing but debts, and his pen, which was his sole chance

of paying them. No one at this period recognised the value of this pen.

Those who knew him and had dealings with him considered him a man who would never do any good for himself—*un incapable*, a fatal epithet which freezes up all the goodwill of others, and often brings the last stroke of ruin upon an unfortunate man. It was denying that force of judgment and clear, quick insight into men and things which he knew he possessed.

This want of faith exasperated my brother a great deal more than the criticisms brought to bear upon his talents as an author, and which buzzed about him, especially from friends, even after he had given brilliant proofs of his genius in 'Louis Lambert' and 'Le Médecin de Campagne.'

His friends tormented him more than his enemies; some of them would say—

'Well, Balzac, when are you going to give us some really good book?'

In their eyes Balzac was merely an author of books of a very slight calibre, a writer of second-rate romances, not a man of solid attainments. If he had only written some heavy work, so solid in learning that very few could have understood it, people would have felt respect for him.

Then, again, whilst abusing him for writing

only works of light literature, they taxed him with arrogance whenever he ventured to touch upon vital questions, and warned him in paternal tones against such presumptuous rashness.

'Why,' said they, 'should you meddle with high social or political questions? Leave all those to philosophers and political economists. You are a man who, as we all agree, possesses plenty of imagination; be content with that, and do not travel out of your speciality. A novel-writer is not expected to be either a learned man or a law-giver.'

Observations of this kind, repeated in various forms by people who were far from being able to understand the strength that lay in him, exasperated him greatly.

'I shall have to die,' he would say bitterly, 'before I can convince people of what I am worth.'

If I seem to attach too much importance to these small judgments, which have been long since put to silence, it is only because they made up the minor miseries of him whose life I am relating.

My brother, wounded and worried by the incessant repetition of unjust judgments, took the course of never defending nor explaining his ideas, his books, nor his own actions; the result was, that people got into the habit of blaming both

without in the least understanding either. He walked straight onwards to the aim he had in view; he went on alone, without support, without encouragement, along a road which his two disasters had filled with thorns and pitfalls.

But these thoughts have carried me away, and it is necessary to return to the year 1827, the period when my brother quitted the printing office and hired a lodging in the Rue Tournon.

It was here that Honoré wrote 'Les Chouans,' the first work to which he signed his name. Very much occupied and fatigued with hard work, he seldom came out to Versailles. Our parents were displeased, and complained of his negligence. I wrote to tell him of this. My letter must have come to hand at a moment when he was worn out with fatigue; for he, who was always so sweet-tempered and patient, answered in a tone of bitterness—

'Your letter has given me two detestable days
'and two equally bad nights.

'I thought over my justification point by point.
'Like the memorial Mirabeau wrote to his father,
'I began to grow eager over this work, but I
'threw it up. I have not the time for it, my sister;
'and, besides, I do not feel that I have done any
'thing wrong.'

A few days afterwards I received a second letter, which I transcribe, because it shows his character. It seems that he needed two screens to finish the furnishing of that lodging, for taking which he had already been reproached with extravagance.

He desired to have these screens much as he had desired to have his father's copy of Tacitus years before, when living in his garret.

'Ah, Laura, if you only knew how wildly I 'desire to have those screens (but *motus*)—those 'two blue screens embroidered with black (but 'again *motus*)!

'In the midst of my worries the thought of these 'screens constantly returned; then I said to my-'self, "I will confide this my desire to Sister Laura. 'When I once obtain these screens I can never do 'anything wrong. For shall I not always have 'before my eyes this memorial of a sister who is 'so indulgent for her own fancies and so severe 'upon mine?" The designs on these screens 'may be whatever you please. They would have 'I know not what charm; I should always find 'them lovely; they would be the gift of my *alma* '*soror*.'

Here he was interrupted by the arrival of some bad news. He goes on in his letter to tell me of

these fresh worries with a vehement warmth of words, but he ends with these two lines—

'My screens! always my screens! I have 'more need than ever of one little pleasure in the 'midst of so many vexations.'

'Les Chouans' was published, and this work, although at first very imperfect, and to which later he added some masterly touches, revealed even then such wonderful talent that it attracted public attention and the notice of the press, which at first showed itself very favourable towards him.

Encouraged by this his first success, he set to work with renewed vigour.

He continued in his retirement, going nowhere, hence the same complainings from our parents and the same warnings from myself.

Possibly he was feeling content with his own work when my letter came to hand; at any rate he replied to it this time in a lively tone.

'Your scoldings, madam, lie before me. I 'see that it has again become necessary to send 'you some further information concerning the poor 'delinquent.

'Dear sister, Honoré is a blundering crea- 'ture, bowed down under his debts, without having 'committed a single folly. He is sometimes 'tempted to knock his head against the wall, though

'some persons will not allow that he has any head 'at all. He is at this moment a prisoner in his 'room with a duel upon his hands. It is abso- 'lutely necessary that he should fight with half a 'ream of paper, and pierce it through with ink 'which must be readable, before he can make his 'purse plump and joyful.'

My brother passed the first years of his literary life in the midst of anxieties which were even worse than those he had suffered in the Rue des Marais, St. Germain; he never could pass down that street without a sigh and the recollection that the misfortunes of his life had commenced there.

He confessed to me that during this period he was frequently subject to attacks of dizziness and to temptations such as he represents as endured by the hero of that work so full of freshness and genius which he has called 'La Peau de Chagrin.'

Assuredly if it had not been for his own faith in himself, and the consciousness that honour demanded he should acquit himself of his liabilities, he would never have lived to write 'La Comédie humaine.'

If he did not retire again to some retreat like his garret in the Rue Lesdiguières, it was because he knew that in Paris people try to make money

out of everything, even out of other men's poverty.

'In a garret,' as he once said to me, 'I should get nothing for my books.'

The luxury to which he was inclined, which was so much blamed and so much exaggerated, was in reality at that time a method by which he hoped to obtain a better price for his works.

My brother was an enthusiastic admirer of Sir Walter Scott, and at first he had the idea of following his example, taking the most remarkable phases of the history of France; for illustration, 'Catherine de Médicis' followed 'Les Chouans.' It is one of his best works, though comparatively unknown.

The introduction shows what Balzac might have been as a historian, had he so chosen.

He afterwards abandoned this project, and confined himself to painting the manners of his own time, of which in his later years he wished to write the history.[1]

He called his works 'Etudes de Mœurs,' and divided them into several series—'Scènes de la Vie privée,' 'de la Vie de Campagne,' 'de la Vie de

[1] Some inaccuracies in the chronological order of Balzac's works have crept into Madame Surville's narrative, but they will be found rectified in the list of his works, which comes at the end of the correspondence.

Province,' 'de la Vie Parisienne,' &c. It was not until 1833, after the publication of 'Le Médecin de Campagne,' that the thought struck him of gathering the different personages of his works together and forming them into a world amongst themselves.

It was a fortunate day for him when this idea came to him.

He set out from the Rue Cassini, where he then lived, and rushed to the Faubourg Poissonnière, where I resided.

'Congratulate me!' he exclaimed joyfully, 'for this time I really am going to prove myself a man of genius.'

He then began to unfold his plan, which, however, seemed somewhat formidable even to his vast brain, and it required some time before it was comfortably arranged there.

'What a fine work it will be, if I succeed,' said he, walking up and down the room, his face radiant with delight (he could not sit still). 'How easily I can now bear to be called a mere novelist whilst I am hewing my stones; and how I enjoy the thought of the surprise of the near-sighted public when they see the great edifice these stones will build.' This 'hewer of stones' then sat down to speak of the work more at his ease.

He judged all the personages who were to play a part in it with perfect impartiality, in spite of the affection he felt for them all.

'So-and-so is a scoundrel, and will never do any good. Such a one is a brave fellow; he works hard; he will become rich, and his good disposition will make him happy.'

'All those other men have committed plenty of peccadilloes, but they have so much strength of character, and so much power of insight into men and things, that they cannot help rising into the high places of the world.'

'Peccadilloes! You are very indulgent to call them thus.'

'What would you have, my dear? I cannot change their nature. These are the men who drop their own lead down into the lower deep, but they know how to guide others. It is not the wisest men who are always the best pilots. It is no fault of mine; I do not invent human nature; I observe it in times past and in the present, and I endeavour to show it as it really is. Imposture in these matters imposes upon nobody.'

He would tell us news from the world of 'La Comédie humaine' just as people tell the news of the world we live in.

'Have you heard,' he would say, 'whom Félix

de Vandenesse is about to marry? It is a Mdlle. de Grandville. It will be a capital match for him: the Grandvilles are rich, notwithstanding all that Mdlle. de Bellefeuille has cost the family.'

If sometimes we interceded for some young man who was on the road to ruin, or for some poor unhappy woman whose sad fate interested us, he would say—

'Do not deafen me with your sentimentalities; truth comes before everything: those people are weak and incapable; what happens to them must happen; so much the worse for them!'

His petulance, however, did not hinder him from feeling a little compassion for them himself.

One of the friends of Dr. Minoret (Captain de Jordy) excited our curiosity. My brother had said nothing about his previous life, but had given it to be understood that he had experienced great misfortunes, and we asked what they were.

'I was not acquainted with M. de Jordy previous to his arrival at Nemours,' he replied.

I one day tried to imagine what might have been the previous life of Captain de Jordy, and I related it to my brother. Such a preoccupation about his characters did not displease him.

'What you suggest is quite possible,' said he;

'and since M. de Jordy interests you, I will some day find out all about him.'

It was a long time before he could meet with a suitable husband for Mdlle. Camille de Grandlieu. He rejected all whom we suggested.

'Those people are not in the same class of society,' said he; 'chance alone could bring about such a marriage, and in books one must make use of chance very sparingly. Fact alone can justify improbability; romance-writers can only be allowed to make use of the possible.'

He selected at last the young Count de Restaud for Mdlle. Camille de Grandlieu, and for this purpose he wrote afresh the very admirable history of Gobseck, where the highest morality is worked out in deeds and not in words.

As mothers love the best those children who are unfortunate, my brother had a tenderness for those of his works which had the least success; he felt jealous for them of the success of the others. Thus the universal admiration called forth by 'Eugénie Grandet' had the effect of making him in the end care very little for this work. When we scolded him for this injustice he would say—

'Just leave me alone! Those who call me the father of "Eugénie Grandet" want to disparage me.

It is, I grant you, a masterpiece in its way, but a very insignificant one. They take good care not to quote my best things.'

When the complete edition of his works was printed he called the whole 'La Comédie humaine.' He decided on this title after much hesitation; he feared it might be considered presumptuous, and he had the presentiment he should not live to carry out his design to the full. Unhappily his presentiment was verified; the work he loved so much was never finished. It was then that he associated his friends with himself by dedicating to each of them one of the books of which the work is composed. The list of these dedications shows that he was beloved by a great number of his most illustrious contemporaries.

Between the years 1827 and 1848 my brother published no less than ninety-seven works, and this enormous quantity of writing was done without the help of any secretary or corrector of the press.

For a short time my brother was attracted by the phenomena of spiritualism. My mother, who was always religious, had made a collection of the writings of the Mystics. Honoré seized upon the works of St. Martin, Swedenborg, Mdlle. Bourignon, Madame Guyon, Jacob Boehm,

making about a hundred volumes, and he devoured them all. He plunged into the study of somnambulism and mesmerism, which are allied with mysticism; and my mother, who was an ardent lover of the marvellous, encouraged and assisted him, for she was acquainted with all the celebrated somnambulists and magnetisers of the period.

Honoré was present at several séances; he became deeply interested in these inexplicable faculties and their phenomena, and he composed the strange story of 'Séraphita' under the influence of these ideas.

But the strong necessities of his life obliged him to work only upon subjects which interested the public and would sell, and, happily for himself, he was brought back from these metaphysical mysteries into the real world before his fine mind had been bewildered and lost its balance, as so many other high intellects have been ruined from the like cause.

But I must hasten on, and abridge details as much as possible. The mere recollection of the labours and events connected with the last twenty years of Balzac's life terrifies me.

Besides the books he wrote, he had to carry

on a voluminous business correspondence, as well as with friends.

During this period he made journeys into Savoy, Sardinia, Corsica, Germany, Italy, St. Petersburg, Southern Russia, which he visited twice; besides the journeys he made into the interior of France, to visit all the spots which he had made the residence of the various characters in his books, that he might be able to describe accurately the towns and country places where he had made them dwell.

Coming in to take leave of us, he would say—

'I am starting for Alençon, for Grenoble, where Mdlle. Cormon and M. Bénasis live.'

Impossibility, either as a word or as a reality, did not exist for him. He proved this by the courage with which he lived through the early years of his literary life, when he would often deprive himself of common necessaries to obtain superfluities which occupied so important a place in the kind of society of which he wrote. The remembrance of this period recalls so vividly to my mind so much intense anxiety that I cannot bear to look back upon it.

Between the years 1827–36 my brother had been obliged to raise money by giving bills, the falling due of which was the cause of perpetual

anxiety to him, because he could only meet them by the produce of his works, and it was always uncertain when he would be able to finish any of them. After having accepted and got these bills discounted, which was the first difficulty, he often had to get them renewed, which was more difficult still; and he had to do it all himself, without any intermediaries, for they would have been sure to fail. But my brother could fascinate everybody, even money-lenders.

'What a waste of intellect!' he would sorrowfully exclaim on his return, broken with fatigue, from one of these undertakings, which were also an interruption of his work.

With all his efforts he could not keep down the debts to the money-lenders, nor the accumulated interest upon them, which, as he used to say when he was in lively spirits, resembled a snow-ball, which grows bigger the longer it rolls; and this floating debt grew so large as months and years passed on, that there were times when my brother was tempted to despair of ever being able to extinguish it.

From time to time, to appease the most clamorous of his creditors, he would make superhuman efforts, and performed such prodigies of work that both publishers and printers were

terrified. These excesses of labour shortened his life, and developed that disease of the heart of which he died.

This state of anxiety lasted till the new editions of his works enabled him to cancel some of his most pressing liabilities.

His joy was great when he could write off some of the cyphers of this terrible debt, which was incessantly before his eyes, goading him on to work.

'After so many labours,' he would say to me, 'shall I ever possess a penny of my very own? I will certainly have it framed, for it will contain in itself the record of my whole life.'

During the years 1832–35 he visited in Angoulême, Aix, Saché, Marseilles, and Milan. His letters from those places show the state of his mind.

Angoulême was the town where the family of Carraud resided, under whose roof my brother often stayed. A warm friendship between my brother and this honourable family had begun in 1826, when I was living at Versailles. M. Carraud was at that time the director of the studies at the military school of St. Cyr. This faithful and intelligent friendship was one of the great blessings of my brother's life. Those of his works which

are dated from Angoulême and from Fapesle—an estate which belonged to Madame Carraud in Berry—bear testimony to the profound sympathy which existed.

Saché is a beautiful estate, about seven leagues from Tours. It belonged to M. de Margonne, a friend of our family. At this place Honoré was always sure of finding a noble hospitality as well as an unchanging affection. With these friends he had the quiet and ease of mind which he could never find in Paris. It was at Saché that he wrote 'Louis Lambert,' 'Le Lys dans la Vallée,' 'La Recherche de l'Absolu,' and several other works which at this moment I do not remember.

After finishing 'Louis Lambert' my brother left Angoulême to visit Savoy. I possess two letters written from Aix, one to my mother and one to myself. To my mother he writes :—

'Aix : September 1, 1832.

'I was deeply touched by reading your letter, 'my dear mother, and I love you for it. When 'shall I ever be able to make a return to you in 'tenderness and happiness for all you have done 'for me?'

In his letter to me he says :—

'Aix : September 15.

'A word of remembrance for you, my beloved 'sister, in the midst of my travels. I have been

'through the most lovely countries. I shall 'see places still more beautiful. Only I want to tell 'you that they do not make me forget you.

'I am on the threshold of Italy, and I am 'afraid lest I should yield to the temptation of 'going forwards. The journey would not be very 'expensive. I should travel with the Fitz-James 'family, who would let me enjoy all possible 'advantages. They are more than good to me. I 'should perform the journey in their carriage; and, 'calculating all expenses, it would not cost more 'than a thousand francs to go from Geneva to 'Rome.'

But on further calculation the journey threatened to cost too much. He gave up the project for the time and returned to Angoulême, where he finished 'La Femme abandonnée,' wrote 'La Grenadière' and 'Le Message,' and began 'Le Médecin de Campagne,' which he finished when he got back to the Rue Cassini.

My brother, to oblige himself to take the exercise which was essential for his health, was accustomed to fetch his proofs, and correct them sometimes at the printing office, sometimes at my house. According to the state of the weather, which had an immense influence over him, the difficulty of his work, or the extreme fatigue of

late hours, he would sometimes arrive dragging himself along with difficulty, gloomy, prostrate, with a sallow face and dark lines under his eyes. On seeing him look so ill and so miserable I would try to find some way of cheering him. He, who could so well divine all that passed in people's thoughts, replied to mine before I had spoken a word.

'Do not try to comfort me; it is all of no use: I am a dead man.'

This dead man would then begin in a mournful tone to tell me all his troubles and embarrassments, but he soon began the grow animated and his voice became strong and vibrating; then he would open his proofs and, resuming his doleful tone, he would say—

'I shall sink under the weight of it all, my sister.'

'Bah!' I would reply, 'people do not sink when they have such works on hand as those you are correcting now.'

He would raise his head, his face would brighten up and the dark lines would disappear by degrees, and he would exclaim—

'You are right; by Heaven, you are right. These books that I have here will keep me alive. Besides, is not Luck, that blind god, always there?

He can help a Balzac as easily as a fool. And it is not even difficult to invent a stroke of luck. Let only one of my millionaire friends (and I have some), or let a banker who has more money than he knows what to do with, come to me and say, "I know all your immense talent, and I know all your money anxieties. You need so much to become free. Accept all you want without scruple. You will pay me back some day; your pen can earn millions." That is all that need happen, my dear.'

Accustomed to these illusions, which always brought back his courage and his gaiety, I listened without the least sign of surprise. Having once begun upon this golden fable, he would go on piling reasons upon reasons why he should expect it to happen.

'These sort of people spend such sums on mere fancies. A good action is a fancy, like anything else, and it gives pleasure at once. It would be something for a man to be able to say, "I have saved a Balzac." Human nature has from time to time its good impulses, and there are people who, without being Englishmen, are capable of committing such eccentricities as these.

'Imagine me,' he would say, striking his breast, 'a millionaire or a banker.'

At this point he would walk up and down the room, throwing his arms about joyfully, saying, 'Ah, Balzac is free! You will see, my dear friends and my dear enemies, how he will get on.' And then he would make a grand dream of all he would do for himself and for France, and how he would show his gratitude to his friend the banker, and all the credit and praise that would accrue to the man who had first divined the value of Balzac, and lent him money which opened for him the road to success. After sailing about for a while on these golden clouds he would come back to reality; but the dream had done its work: it had distracted his thoughts from himself. He would correct his proofs, and afterwards read them to us with enthusiasm; then would leave us, laughing at himself, saying, 'Adieu. I am going home to see if my banker has arrived and is waiting for me;' and then with his own good laugh he would add, 'Well, if he is not there I shall at least find work there, and work is the true banker who furnishes me with funds.' He was always ardently seeking to get free from debt, and his various schemes exhausted him quite as much as his literary work.

One day he thought he had discovered a new substance from which paper might be made. This

substance was both cheap and plentiful, and easy to be obtained. He was sanguine and delighted; but disappointment followed. The experiments which were made did not succeed.

A friend went to see him, expecting to find him much cast down; but, on the contrary, he was radiant and joyful.

'But about the paper?'

'Never mind paper. Has it never struck any of you that the Romans knew but little about the working of mines, and that they left untold riches in their scoriæ? Some learned men of the Institute whom I have consulted are of my opinion, and I am about to start for Sardinia.'

'And how are you raising the money to go there?'

'I shall walk through the country with a knapsack, dressed like a beggar—a terror to brigands and to monks. I have calculated everything; six hundred francs will be quite sufficient.'

The six hundred francs were raised, and he set off. He wrote to us from Marseilles, March 20, 1833:—

'Do not, my dear mother, feel in the least 'anxious about me, and tell Laura not to be anxious 'either; and, without disparagement for the *Lau-*

'*réenne* wisdom, I feel assured that I shall not 'need any money to bring me back. I have just 'passed five days and five nights on the imperial. 'My hands are swollen; I can scarcely write. 'To-morrow (Wednesday) I shall be at Toulon, 'and on Thursday I shall set off for Ajaccio.'

His own narration of his adventures during this singular journey should have been heard to be appreciated. Once he had the good fortune to fall in with some genuine brigands.

'They are rather good devils,' said he, 'in all 'that does not concern their special calling. They 'gave me information about all I wanted to know. 'These gentry know the exact worth of both things 'and people in that country. They quite under-'stood that they could get nothing out of me and 'that I had nothing worth robbing, and I really 'believe—Heaven forgive me if I am wrong—but 'I think they were more inclined to lend me money 'than to take it from me.'

When my brother arrived at Bastia he was penniless, but he caused quite a commotion amongst the young men when he told his name. They all had read his books, and were in a state of enthusiasm at the sight of him, which was a great pleasure to him.

'I have already made a reputation in Corsica,'

he told us. 'What charming young men! what a 'lovely country!'

M. Béhic, the Inspector of Finances, received him into his house and made much of him. My brother whilst his guest won sufficient money at play to defray his expenses back to France; it happened just at the moment when he was about to write to us for the necessary funds. He enjoyed these strokes of good luck; they gave him faith in his star. But, besides walking through Sardinia and being tossed about on the sea, he had found subjects for his books—such excellent subjects—the last were always sure to be better than the first—unless one happened to agree with him, when he would find a score of good reasons to prove that the first were the best.

He related to us all these new subjects with much energy—plots, details, and everything. He had worked them all out in his mind.

'That will make something good,' he would say.

'Do you go telling your plots and your ideas to everybody you meet?' I asked with some uneasiness, for I knew that in the good republic of literature people are not always scrupulous about their neighbours' right to their own ideas.

'Why should I not tell them?' he replied. 'The

subject is nothing; the execution is everything. Let them write like Balzac. I defy them. Are thieves ever capable of hard work? If they succeed, so much the better for the public. I shall regret nothing they have taken; I can find something else, I suppose. This world is wide, and the brain of a man is as capacious as the world.'

The specimens that he had brought from the mines were submitted to chemists for analysis. This was an affair that required time. Honoré was not, besides, at that moment in a position to go to demand a concession from the Government of Piedmont. He had, in the first instance, to satisfy the demands of his publishers and to earn the money that such a journey would require.

He lived for a whole year in the castles in the air which he built upon the fine fortune which was to be made in Sardinia; he lived in the future and imagined for himself a terrestrial Eden, which he arranged in all things according to his own fancy. These dreams of his made the hearts of his friends as sad as his real sorrows; for did they not both show in different ways the pressure of his anxieties? It was only in his dreams he could escape from them. Once awake, he had again to take up his burden.

The year following his journey to Sardinia my

brother, having achieved all the literary tasks due to his publishers and the different reviews, set off for Piedmont, to arrange for the concession of the mines. Frank and expansive as he always was, he had the year before explained the object of his journey to the Genoese captain of the vessel which carried him over to Sardinia. The delay in my brother's journey to Piedmont had given time to the Genoese to turn these confidences to his own profit, and when he reached the end of his journey he found that this was the case.

'The delay has been fatal to my hopes. The 'Genoese has obtained a contract from the 'Sardinian Government, made out in due form. 'There is a million of silver to be got out of the 'scoriæ and in the lead mines. A firm at Marseilles, 'to whom he applied, has assayed them. I ought not 'to have loosened my hold on the idea last year, and 'to have been beforehand with them. However, I 'have found another idea, which is even better than 'the other. I will talk it over with yourself and 'your husband when I get back. . . . This time 'there will be no Genoese in the matter. I am 'already almost consoled.'

It was always thus; another hope always replaced the deceptions of the last.

Honoré had a project for writing a work to be

called 'Les Aventures d'une Idée heureuse,' which had been suggested by the failure of his brother-in-law in a great undertaking in which he had embarked. Balzac proposed in this book to write the history of an Idea which would have been useful to all the world, but which is crushed and frustrated by the many persons whose private interests would be injured by it, and who combine to ruin the man who has devoted himself to the working of it out. This subject, which would have afforded in his hands so many observations and social truths, was never written. It would not have been the least remarkable of his works.

On his return from Geneva in 1836 he wrote to me:—

'I have good news for you, my dear little 'sister. The reviews are paying me better for 'my pages.

'Hé! hé!

'Werdet tells me that the edition of "Le 'Médecin de Campagne" has been sold out in 'eight days.

'Ha! ha!

'I have funds enough to meet the heavy pay-'ments which fall due in November and December, 'about which you were so anxious.

'Ho! ho!

'Also I have sold a new edition of the works of 'that foolish fellow "Horace de Saint-Aubin," '"Lord R'hoone," "Viellerglé," and other pseudo-'nymes. I am to have a third of the profit, with 'the power of denying the authorship of these 'works, *none of which I will ever acknowledge.* 'But as these are being republished in that damned 'Belgium, which is as bad for authors as it is for 'publishers, I yield to the necessity which trans-'lates itself into good crown-pieces, and in this 'way the effect of the injury is limited.

'Souverain is to edit my "Contes drôlatiques."

'Ecco, sorella!'

This money led a little later to the purchase of a small piece of ground at Ville d'Avray, where he built Les Jardies. But the whole thing was a failure. The steep incline on which the house was built caused the walls to sink; the property cost much more than it was worth; and at last, under pressure of difficulties, my brother was obliged to sell it, and he always considered this purchase a mistake.

In the 'Contes drolatiques' Honoré proposed to exhibit all the transformations which the French language has undergone since the days of Rabelais to the present time, giving to each story the ideas proper to each period. He thought that if all his

other works should be forgotten these 'Contes drolatiques' would keep his name alive.

The studies which my brother made for this purpose amongst the Old French prose-writers made him regret the loss of certain words fallen obsolete and which had never been replaced.

'What beautiful words!' he would exclaim. 'The like of them are only to be found in the infancy of a language. How exactly they express their meaning! and with what an artless grace! In these days a whole phrase is required to supply their place.'

He was angry with those who blamed him for some expressions which he had created, and which are to be found here and there in his works.

'Who, then, ought to have the privilege of enriching a language if it is not an author? Our language has accepted many words from those who have gone before me; it may accept mine also. These parvenu words will become noble in time. The maker of all nobility is Time.'

'Le Lys dans la Vallée,' the idea of which had been suggested in Switzerland, was published in 'La Revue de Paris.' During the appearance of the early chapters my brother was informed by some friends at St. Petersburg that the com-

plete work had been published there. My brother, thinking that this proceeding was unknown to the editor, and that it was contrary to his interests, hastened to give him the information. My brother found it was the editor—who no doubt believed he had the perfect right to act thus—who had arranged for this republication. My brother exclaimed against this conduct; the editor became angry and would listen to no proposals for an amicable arrangement.

Honoré then declared he should appeal to the tribunals, that the rights of authors might be judicially decided. He would not allow the present occasion to pass, as it might be made a precedent, to the detriment of other authors as well as of himself.

To undertake this action was dangerous, for, whether he gained or lost his cause, 'La Revue' would become his mortal enemy and its columns would be closed against him, and there was the money part of the affair besides.

These considerations did not deter my brother. The lawsuit began. His astonishment was great when his adversary appeared in court armed with a testimonial in his favour signed by nearly all the authors whose rights he was preparing to defend at his own risk and peril. Honoré was

much pained by their defection, and for a long time afterwards he divided his *confrères* into two classes—those who had signed the testimonial and those who had not. The logical stupidity of those who had signed vexed him even after his first annoyance had passed away.

His case was clear: he gained his cause and made numerous enemies.

This lawsuit, and the work he published shortly afterwards entitled 'Les Illusions perdues,' where he treats of *feuilletonistes*, set the whole press against him and roused animosities which even his death did not altogether set at rest. He cared very little for abuse, and often brought us the articles to read which were the most severe upon him; but we felt differently and were much pained by these attacks.

'Are you not very foolish,' he would say, 'to feel annoyed? Critics cannot make my works either good or bad. Leave all to Time, the sovereign justice. If these people are wrong the public will see it some day, and the injustice will then tell in favour of those who have been the victims. Besides, these *guerrilleros* of art sometimes hit their mark, and by correcting the faults they point out the work is made more perfect,

and in the end I find that I ought to feel grateful to them.'

He did not wish either to protest or to recriminate; he wished to keep entire silence towards his detractors. His friends accused him of weakness and cowardice, and against his judgment forced him to show his claws and to write 'La Monographie de la Presse.' Wit sparkled in every line, but he never ceased to regret a work that he considered was a wrong done to his own dignity, whatever credit it might be to his talent.

The consequences of this lawsuit were disastrous both to his purse and to his health. The great journals closed their columns against him. In the year 1834 he went to Saché, where he remained for three months, out of the way of his worries, kindly cared for and finding peace and comfort with those steadfast friends. There he finished 'Le Père Goriot,' corrected the proofs of 'La Recherche de l'Absolu,' and began to write a drama—the subject 'Marie Touchet'—which, however, he did not complete.

About this time he suffered a great sorrow in the death of one who was very dear to him and whom he had deeply loved; his letters to me on this subject were eloquent in the expression of his deep grief.

In 1835 he was at La Boulonnière, a small estate near Nemours, where he had placed the personages of his novel of 'Ursule Mirouët,' and from thence he wrote to me :—

'I have finished "La Fleur de Pois."' (This was its first title ; he afterwards changed it to 'Le Contrat de Mariage.') 'I think I have succeeded in what I wished to do. The single scene of the marriage contract indicates what will be the future destiny of the married pair.

'Here is one great *scène de la vie privée* finished. In a future one—"L'Inventaire après Décès"—the horrible will mix with the ridiculous. Brokers and appraisers ought to know something of human wickedness ; I shall make them talk amongst themselves.'

In speaking of the labours and vexations of my brother I must not omit the 'Chronique de Paris' and 'La Revue Parisienne.' His own place in literature was now conquered, and he hoped by editing and establishing these works to get out of debt as soon as possible, which was an ever-present desire, and it urged him to undertake this enterprise. ' A friend of my mother's lent him the money necessary to defray the expenses of the first few numbers of 'Le Chronique,' which preceded 'La Revue Parisienne.' His good and

faithful friends came to his aid—Théophile Gautier, Laurent, Jan, Léon Gozlan, the Marquis de Belloy, the Comte de Gramont. He also engaged young writers whose future success he could foresee. Amongst others by Charles de Bernard, 'La Femme de Quarante Ans' appeared in 'Le Chronique'—a *chef-d'œuvre* which afterwards had a great success.

In spite of these able supporters 'Le Chronique' failed for want of subscribers.

Some years later this indefatigable and ever-sanguine man wrote almost the whole of the three numbers of 'La Revue Parisienne.' He was then living at Ville d'Avray. In this Review he published articles on Frederick Stendhal, Walter Scott, and Cooper, which, I have been told, are models of literary criticism.

Whilst he resided at Ville d'Avray he rented a lodging in the house of Buisson, a tailor, at the corner of the Boulevard and of the Rue Richelieu. He always slept there when he spent an evening in Paris. After he had sold Les Jardies he went to live in the Rue Basse, No. 19, at Passy, where he remained for several years, and which he only left to install himself in his own house of Beaujon, from which he never removed.

The attacks of the critics redoubled in their

animosity. They accused him of immorality, which was the surest way to injure him and to alienate the public from him. His works were prohibited in Spain, in Italy, especially in Rome. It is easy to define what is immoral in actions, but more difficult when it comes to works of art.

These accusations gave deep pain to my brother, and at times caused him great discouragement.

'People obstinately refuse to look upon my work as a whole, in order to tear it to pieces in detail,' he would say. 'My critics in their false modesty drop their eyes before certain characters in "La Comédie humaine," who are unfortunately just as true to life as the others, and who spring up like an undergrowth which has been cut down in the manners of the present time. There are vices in our own days, as in all others. Do they expect that, in the name of innocence, I should clothe in virgin white (*vouasse au blanc*) the two or three thousand personages who figure in "La Comédie humaine"? I would like to see what they would make of these people. I have not invented Marneffe male and female, nor the Hulots, nor the Philippe Bridaus, who brush against everybody in the crowd of our old civilisation. I write for men, not for young girls. Let anyone

point to a single page in which religion and family life are attacked.'

This injustice went to my brother's heart. 'Of how many torments and vexations success is made up!' he would exclaim, resting his head between his hands. 'But, after all, what is the use of complaining?'

My brother has said somewhere, 'La mort est le sacre du génie.'

The fragments of the letters which I have given will show the warmth of his heart and the burning soul within, which no disappointment nor deception could render cold. To read through his correspondence makes one's head turn round. What labours does it not reveal? What projects, what hopes, are to be seen succeeding each other; what activity of mind, and what noble courage, rising afresh after each defeat. What a richly endowed organisation!

If the sorrows of the heart, which he had as well as others, or fatigue, made him sometimes feel discouragement, with what a firm will he always quelled it, his powerful energy asserting itself afresh, and, along with that, the power which never failed him of doing work.

It must be remembered that the Balzac who was to be seen in society was not the Balzac who

opened his heart so frankly to us in his conversations and in his letters. In the world he appeared always amiable and brilliant. He was able to keep all his anxieties so completely in abeyance that he seemed as happy as the happiest. He was quite aware of his own genius, and found no difficulty in taking the lead of everyone present.

He proudly concealed his poverty and his difficulties, because he did not choose to be pitied; but if he had felt more free to act as he pleased, more independent of his embarrassments, he would have owned proudly that he was poor.

It was through struggles and misfortunes that my brother gained his knowledge of the world and of men.

Those who have known Balzac through the whole of his life are well aware that this man, so clear-sighted, so lucid in his judgment, was the most simple and confiding of human beings, almost childlike in his amusements, and of a temper and disposition so sweet even in the days when he was most depressed and discouraged that he made life happy to those who lived most intimately and closely with him.

This man, who wrote 'Le Curé de Village,' 'Les Parents pauvres,' 'Les Paysans,' in his hours of relaxation, was like a schoolboy in the holidays.

He sowed convolvulus all the length of his garden wall in the Rue Basse at Passy, watched the flowers open in the morning, admired their colours, and delighted in the hues of certain insects ; would walk across the Bois de Boulogne to Suresnes, where we were then staying for a short time, to take a hand at boston, showing himself more of a child than any of his nieces. He would laugh heartily at *calembours*, and envied those who had the gift of making them. Sometimes he would try to make one himself, but did not succeed. 'No,' he would say regretfully, 'no ; that is not a *calembour*.' He was always ready to repeat the only two he had ever made in his life. 'I never intended them,' he would say with humility ; 'I made them without knowing.' We even suspected he had improved upon them in after moments.

Inventing *proverbes*, a game then in vogue, amused him greatly, and he was more successful with them than with *calembours*. He composed some for the utterance of his *Mistigris* in 'Un Début dans la Vie' and for Madame Crémière in 'Ursule Mirouët.' 'La femme doit être la chenille ouvrière de la maison' gave him as much delight as if it had been one of his profoundest thoughts. 'None of you could have made that,' said he.

When we had lotteries he invented mottoes under which the lots were hidden, and was enchanted when he brought us some good ones. 'An author is of use sometimes,' he would say quite gravely.

He had a singular theory about names. He used to say that names which were invented never imparted life to imaginary characters, whilst those names which had belonged to real people endowed the personages of a book with vitality.

All the names in 'La Comédie humaine' were found as he was taking his walks up and down. He would come home delighted whenever he had met with one that was suitable. '"Matifat," "Cardot," what delectable names!' he said to me. 'I found "Matifat" in the Rue de la Perle in the Marais. I see what my Matifat will be like already. He will have a pale, cat-shaped face, not much inclined to be stout; for Matifat can have nothing great about him, as you may imagine.'

'And Cardot, what of him?'

'He will be quite of another type—a little man as dry as a bit of gravel, lively and enjoying himself.'

I can well understand his delight when he discovered the name of Marcas.

Knowing, as we did, the fidelity to life of certain personages in 'La Comédie humaine'—for if my

brother borrowed the names of living people he also did the same by their characters—we were sometimes terrified lest these resemblances should be discovered, and so raise further hatred against him.

'Simpletons that you are, all of you!' he would say to us, laughing and shrugging his strong shoulders, which had the weight of a world upon them. 'Do you imagine that anyone knows what he really is? Are there such things as mirrors that can reflect the moral likeness? If some Van Dyck like myself were to paint my portrait, I should in all likelihood look at myself as if it were some stranger.'

He would go and audaciously read his types of character to the very persons who had stood for the originals. They never failed to justify this idea, for whilst we would listen with trembling anxiety, thinking it impossible that they should not recognise themselves, they would say, 'How true to the life are those characters! You must have known Mr. So-and-so or So-and-so. It is to the life—as true as if they had been sitting for their portrait.'

But, in addition to those who could not recognise themselves, there were others who insisted that other personages in 'La Comédie humaine'

had been intended for them. Many were the women who flattered themselves that they had inspired the touching character of Henriette.

My brother never undeceived any of these dear mistaken ones, but left them in the pleasant delusion which made them his ardent defenders. Let his silence on these things be forgiven him. He had great need of devoted admirers.

No author ever thought out his plans more carefully, or matured them longer in his mind, than Balzac before he committed them to paper. At the time of his death he carried in his mind more than one book completely thought out, but which he was reserving for the maturity of his genius for execution, recoiling with awe from the vast horizons which were opening before him.

'I have not yet arrived at the perfection which is necessary before I dare undertake these great subjects,' was what he was always saying.

The 'Essai sur les Forces humaines,' 'La Pathologie de la Vie sociale,' 'L'Histoire des Corps enseignants,' 'La Monographie de la Vertu,' such were the titles of some of these books, the pages of which will unfortunately remain for ever unwritten.

Those who have studied the works of Balzac will not be likely to accuse him, as was formerly

the case, of going haphazard towards an unforeseen *dénouement.* He might in the course of working out a story change something in the details, but never in the plan which he had previously decided upon in his own mind.

He held firmly in the grasp of careful workmanship the gift of enormous fertility and facility with which nature had endowed him. 'One should always be careful and mistrust these qualities,' he used to say; 'they often lead to a sterile abundance. Boileau was right; one must always curb one's style, which alone can give permanence to any work of art.'

On this account his great artist soul was pained to behold the immense talents squandered and wasted by some of his contemporary authors, who he said abandoned themselves to these dangerous gifts.

The love which he had for perfection, and his profound reverence for his own genius, and also his respect for the public, caused him often to elaborate his style too much. Except a few works which were written under a happy inspiration, and which he scarcely retouched (such as 'La Messe de l'Athée,' 'La Grenadière,' 'Le Message,' 'La Femme abandonnée,' &c.), it was only after having successively corrected eleven or twelve

proofs of the same sheet that he gave the permission to be printed off, so ardently longed for by the poor printers, who were so wearied out with these corrections that they could none of them print more than one page at a time of Balzac.

His habit of insisting upon so many successive proofs of the same sheet diminished greatly the sums he received for his works, for no publisher could stand the expense. One of the accusations against him was that it was to make more money, and to save himself trouble, that he wrote his works as they passed through the press; but it was not accusations like these which troubled my brother. What annoyed him the most was to hear those who pretended to praise his works without in the least understanding them.

Much has been said, and not without truth, of his excessive *amour-propre*; but it was all so frank, and so well justified moreover, that it was far preferable to the false humility which often covers a good deal of pride.

A high conviction of his own powers may be well forgiven in a man who wrote such works as 'Le Médecin de Campagne,' 'La Recherche de l'Absolu,' 'Le Curé de Village,' and so many other first-class works, especially when the con-

viction of his own genius and his own faith in himself could alone supply the patience and the strength needed for such creations.

Of course it would have been better for him if he could have repressed this *naïf* enthusiasm about himself, but it would have been requiring the impossible from a man at once so frank and so susceptible to every impression.

It may be seen from his letters how great misgivings followed close upon his great satisfaction with his own work, and they were to the full as genuine as his displays of *amour-propre*. But it must not be thought that this self-love was so deaf that it would not listen to the truth. If any friends said to him, 'It seems to us that such and such a thing is bad,' he would first remonstrate, justify himself, and, it might be, abuse them, and insist that the passage they complained of was precisely the best piece in the book; but if, in spite of his anger and self-assertion, they kept firmly to their opinion, this firmness took effect. None of the observations were lost upon him. He reflected upon them during the solitary hours when he worked at night, and would come back and shake hands with the friends who had ventured to tell him the truth.

He would say frankly, 'You are right,' or,

'You are wrong,' being equally grateful in either case, for he loved his friends better than his own self-esteem. He was always the first to laugh at his own good opinion of himself, and he let others laugh with him.

He knew the praise that was worth having, and he never was the dupe of the commonplace expressions of admiration which were constantly addressed to him. He was simple-minded and confiding, but it was not in him to be a fool.

He admired talent wherever he found it, whether amongst friends or enemies, and took the part of both whenever their intellect was attacked or calumniated by vulgar stupidity.

How often has he assisted, unknown to themselves, young authors whose first works he has chanced to read, by recommending them to the editors of reviews and journals.

'That man has promise in him,' he would say. Such a judgment coming from him had weight.

He could sum up the situation or the prospects of a man in a picturesque or incisive phrase. It was impossible for anyone to tell a story better, to talk better, or to read aloud better than he did. It was, therefore, impossible to judge of the weak

points of any of his books by listening to his own reading of them. He could have made one admire the poetry of a Trissotin.

The selfishness with which he has been reproached was the consequence of his unfortunate situation and his enormous labours. Had he been more free, he would have been helpful and devoted. As it was we can appeal to the life-long friendships which he preserved to the day of his death, and to the young rising literary men to whom he often gave his counsels—and his time, his only fortune.

My brother possessed the art of making himself so greatly beloved that, once in his presence, people forgot the complaints, well- or ill-founded, they might have against him, and they could only recollect the affection they felt for him.

All the servants who ever lived with him have never forgotten him, though he could not do all he would have wished for them; all of them loved him with devotion, and yet it was neither idleness nor abundance that they had with him.

'I know not what there is about him,' said they, 'but one would serve him for nothing. When he wants you to do anything one feels neither fatigue nor want of sleep; and whether he

scolds you or rewards you, one is equally satisfied with him.'

As to his friendships, he preserved them all and betrayed none. Living on terms of intimacy with the most remarkable men of his time, all of them felt honoured by his affection and paid it back by their own. Often he would quit his work to visit a sick friend. He was so much engrossed when with those he loved that he would come in to see them intending to stay only a moment and he would remain with them for hours; then, starting up with sudden remorse, he would admonish himself by saying—

'Monster! wretched creature! you ought to have been writing copy for the printers all this time instead of staying to chatter!'

Then he would waste more time by calculating how much these hours of relaxation had cost him—a fabulous calculation, which, starting from reasonable figures, mounted up to enormous sums, because 'one must always take new editions into account,' he would say.

To sum up all in one word, this great soul had all the charms and graces that goodness can bestow. His childlike gaiety and lightheartedness afforded him that serenity which was essential to enable him to work.

George Sand, who knew him well, and whom he always called 'son frère George,' has only been mistaken on one point, and that is in the extreme *sagesse* with which she credits him. It was praise he did not deserve. After his work, which took precedence of everything else, my brother loved and enjoyed all the pleasures of life. I think that he possibly might have been a great coxcomb if he had not been the most reticent and discreet of men. He, who was so open and communicative in all that concerned himself, never was guilty of the slightest indiscretion as regarded his relations with others; he faithfully guarded their secrets if he did not know how to keep his own.

My brother used to say gaily, when speaking of the shortness of his stature (he was only five feet high), that great men had almost always been little ones. 'The head ought always to be near the heart,' he would add, 'to enable those two powers which govern the human frame to work well.'

When at home he always wore an ample white cashmere dressing-gown, lined with white silk, cut like the frock of a monk and tied round his waist by a girdle of white silk cord. His head was covered with a black velvet skull-cap, which he first adopted in his garret and retained ever

afterwards. It was my mother who always made these caps for him.

According to the time of day when he went abroad, his attire was either excessively slovenly or extremely neat. If anyone had met him in the morning, worn out by twelve hours' work, on his road to the printing office—an old battered hat pulled over his eyes, his beautiful hands hidden in large coarse gloves, his feet thrust into half-boots, large loose full trousers in plaits over his feet—he might have been confounded with the passers-by; but if he once lifted his hat and exposed his forehead, if he looked at you, or if he spoke to you, the dullest and commonest man could never have forgotten him. His intellect, kept so constantly on the stretch, had still further developed the naturally large forehead which gathered so much light. Intellect showed itself in the first words he uttered, and even in his gestures. A painter would have studied that mobile face, over which all thoughts and feelings were constantly passing, and on which all sentiments were expressed—joy, sorrow, energy, depression, irony, hopes, disappointments. All the moods of his soul were reflected there.

He triumphed over the vulgarity of being

stout by his manners and gestures, which were marked by a native grace and distinction.

His hair, the arrangement of which he often varied, was always picturesque, however it might be worn.

The bust of my brother at the age of forty-four, executed by David, will convey his likeness to posterity. It faithfully conveys his fine forehead and his magnificent hair, indicating that his bodily force was equal to the strength of his intellect. The marvellous setting of his eyes; the fine lines of that square-cut nose, of that mouth so exquisitely curved, where goodnature was allied with wit; that chin which completed the pure oval of his face before his tendency to corpulence had marred its regularity—all are there. But unhappily marble has not been able to express the fire and intellect of those burning eyes—brown specked with gold, like those of a lynx. Those eyes interrogated and replied without the help of words; they seemed to see ideas and feelings; they threw out jets of fire that seemed to come from within, and to give out light instead of receiving it.

Balzac's friends will recognise the truth of these lines; those who never saw him may tax me with exaggeration.

My brother competed for the *prix Montyon*

with his 'Médecin de Campagne,' and did not obtain it.

He presented himself twice at the Académie, and was not received.

I will say a few words about 'Vautrin,' the first play of my brother's that was ever acted. It was represented on March 14, 1840, at the Porte Saint-Martin. The actor who had the part of Vautrin took the notion—unknown both to the manager and to my brother—of copying a very exalted personage in the scene where Vautrin appears as a Mexican general. Honoré felt at once that the play would be forbidden.

I well knew the circumstances that rendered success imperative for my brother, and being anxious about the effect that this overthrow of his hopes might have upon him, I hastened the next morning to the Rue Richelieu, to the lodging my brother occupied. I found him in a high fever, and took him home to be nursed.

Two hours after his arrival at our house Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, and others of his *confrères* came to offer him their services.

M. —— also came, and said to my brother that he would secure him a handsome indemnity if he would consent to withdraw 'Vautrin' from representation, and so spare the authorities an

initiative which would be very unpleasant to them.

'Sir,' replied my brother, 'the interdiction of 'Vautrin" will be very prejudicial to my interests, but I will not accept money as payment for an injustice; I will not withdraw my play; let them interdict it.'

'Vautrin' was withdrawn after three representations.

The time will perhaps come when the narrative can be given of the closing years of my brother's life; the details will be supported by letters, which will show the change that an experience he had so dearly purchased had brought to his vast intellect.

The Balzac of that period had become cured of his expansiveness, and was prudent, grave almost to seriousness, though without any touch of misanthropy.

I will speak of the latter days of his life, broken down in the prime of his age, and of his genius before he had accomplished his work, just when he was hoping for happiness, and when he was at least going to enjoy the tranquillity he had so long desired; they were things that moved the hearts of both friends and enemies.

Immense successes and devoted attachments

made up the joys of his life; he had also to endure deep sorrows. Nothing can be small or circumscribed in a heart that God has endued with the exquisite sensibilities of an exalted intellect.

Who is there who will venture to pity him or to envy him?

I have revealed his character; I have shown what he was in his private life, his family affections, his friendships; I have told his misfortunes, valiantly struggled with and courageously endured. I think my task is fulfilled in making the world esteem and love the man whom it admires as an author. I have confined myself to doing this, and so have discharged my obligations towards him and towards the world.

To great writers alone belongs the right of judging what he was as an author.

LAURA SURVILLE, *née* BALZAC.

1858.

A few details upon the origin of some of Balzac's works will not be without interest.

The subject of 'L'Auberge Rouge' is perfectly true, whatever may have been said to the contrary. It was related to Balzac by an old army surgeon,

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a friend of the man who was unjustly condemned. Balzac added nothing except the *dénouement.*

The romance of 'Quentin Durward,' the historical portions of which have been so greatly admired, roused Balzac's indignation. He asserted that Sir Walter Scott had strangely misrepresented Louis XI., a king to whom he declared justice had never been done. This feeling induced him to compose 'Maître Cornélius,' a work where Louis XI. appears on the scene.

'Les Deux Proscrits' was written after a deep and prolonged study of Dante, and intended as an act of homage to the poet.

'Un Episode sous la Terreur' was related to Balzac by the sombre hero of this story.

Balzac greatly desired to see Samson, the chief executioner of Paris—'l'exécuteur des hautes œuvres.' He wished to know what were the thoughts of this man, whose whole soul must have been filled with the recollections of such terrible tragedies; he desired to learn how his terrible calling and his miserable mode of life affected him. It was exactly the kind of study to attract Balzac.

M. Appert, the Inspector-General of Prisons, with whom Balzac was intimate, contrived an in-

terview. Calling one day by appointment on M. Appert, Balzac met a stranger—a man very pale, with a serious and noble countenance. His manners, his language, his evident cultivation and intelligence, induced Balzac to take him for some learned man who had come there from the same interest and curiosity which had brought him. The stranger was Samson.

Balzac, warned by M. Appert, repressed all signs of surprise or repulsion, and turned the conversation upon the subjects which interested him. He inspired Samson with so much confidence that, throwing off all reserve, he ended by describing all the sufferings of his life. The death of Louis XVI. had left him with the terrors and the remorse of a criminal. (Samson was a Royalist.) The morning after the execution he caused *une messe expiatoire* to be said for the King. It was probably the only one celebrated in Paris on that day.

The article entitled 'Une Passion dans le Désert' was founded on a conversation Balzac had with Martin, the celebrated tamer of wild beasts, after one of his performances.

'Séraphita,' that strange work which seems like a translation from the German, was inspired by a female friend.

NOTE.—I find in one of his letters this judgment upon George Sand :—

'She has none of the littleness of soul nor any of the base jealousies which obscure the brightness of so much contemporary talent. Dumas resembles her in this respect. George Sand is a very noble friend, and I would consult her with full confidence in my moments of doubt on the logical course to pursue in such or such a situation ; but I think she lacks the instinct of criticism : she allows herself to be too easily persuaded ; she does not hold with sufficient tenacity to her own judgment ; she does not understand the art of refuting the arguments of her adversary nor of justifying herself.'

LETTERS.

To Mdlle. Laure de Balzac,[1] *at Villeparisis (Seine-et-Marne).*

9 Rue Lesdiguières,[2] Paris : April 12, 1819.

You insist, my dear sister, upon having all the details of my removal hither, and of my mode of living in this place. I obey.

I have already told mamma all about my purchases; but you will tremble when I tell you that I have done something more than make a purchase : *I have hired a servant.*

'A servant! my dear brother, how can you think of such a thing?'

Yes, I have hired a servant, and he has a name quite as strange as the servant of Dr. Nacquart,[3] whom he calls 'Tranquille;' mine is called 'Moi-même'—a bad bargain truly.

[1] *Les Proscrits* and *Un Début dans la Vie* are dedicated to his sister.

[2] 9 Rue Lesdiguières, near the Arsenal.

[3] *Le Lys dans la Vallée* is dedicated to Dr. Nacquart.

Moi-même is idle, thoughtless, and clumsy. His master is hungry or thirsty, and often he has not even bread or water to offer him; he has not even a notion of how to keep out the wind which whistles through the door and the window like Tulou on his flute—but not so sweetly.

As soon as I awake I ring for Moi-même, and he makes my bed and tries to sweep out the room, but he is not very skilful in the business.

'Moi-même!'

'What did you say, sir?'

'Look at that cobweb, where the big fly is making a noise that deafens me—those flocks underneath the bed—that dust on the windows, which gets into my eyes and blinds me.'

'But, sir, I see nothing.'

'There! Hold your tongue and do not argue!' and he is silent.

He brushes my clothes; he sweeps whilst he sings, and sings whilst he sweeps; he laughs when he talks, and talks when he laughs. He is not a bad fellow, after all. He has put my linen in order in the cupboard beside the chimney-piece, after carefully papering it with white paper. With six-pennyworth of blue paper, and some bordering which was given to him, he has contrived to make me a screen. He has painted

the room white, from the bookcase to the chimney-piece.

When he is tired of his work—which he is not at present—I shall send him to Villeparisis [1] to fetch some fruit, or, better still, to Alby,[2] to enquire after my cousin.

I have said enough about the servant; now let us talk about the master, who is myself.

I have done my best, dear sister, to gild the cage of the little grey bird; but a few flowers must be added, and I find those when I am writing to you.

'Is not my brother a flatterer?'

Do you not see that I am treating you to a few spare compliments, the rest of which I have paid to the young lady on the second floor? But, alas! the current of my love has been much disturbed since I made the discovery that she is in love with a servant. Yes, Moi-même makes soft speeches to her!

Now I am going to chatter. Having concluded the official gazette, here follows the *feuilleton.*

The father and mother on the second floor

[1] The village to which the Balzac family had retired.

[2] When young Honoré first went to Paris to try his fortune in literature, it was agreed by his parents that it should be said to the friends of the family that he was on a visit to a cousin at Alby, so that in case of failure it might be a secret.

seem to be excellent people, but I cannot quite make out what they are. The father is paralysed down the whole of the left side.

I have also an excellent man for my landlord. His wife is in business—somewhat vulgar, in spite of her showy good looks. They have two children—the eldest a son, a great lazy fellow, and a daughter, married to a china dealer in the Rue du Petit-Lion, where we bought the soup tureen for mamma's small dinner service.

As to the bachelor on the third floor, he is an idler, a do-nothing.

Can you believe that I have been here an entire week—thinking a little, setting things to rights a little, eating a bit, walking a little, yet doing nothing worth speaking about? 'Coqsigrue'[1] is at the present moment beyond my powers. It must be ruminated and well considered before it is written. I am studying in order to form my taste: I should be tempted to fancy sometimes that I had lost my head, had I not the luck to hold that respectable *chef* fast in my hands.

News! something that must seem to you quite extraordinary. I have not once opened my sugar-basin.

What a baby I am! But you see I am not

[1] A projected novel, never written.

writing a set letter; I am letting my thoughts go free, and they run wild.

Don't be surprised that I am writing to you on half a sheet of paper with a bad pen, and that I am sending you a budget of nonsense. I must retrieve my expenses, and make economies in everything, even in my handwriting, and even in my intellect, as you can see.

I am sorry I have not time to write to Laurentia,[1] whom I love—shall I say it?—as much as yourself. Well, yes—as much as yourself. Good-bye, dear, good sister. I embrace you with all my heart, and Laurentia likewise.

To M. Théodore Dablin,[2] Merchant, Paris.

Paris: September 1819.

Perfidious Daddy,—It is sixteen long days since I saw you last. This is very bad of you—you, who are my only comfort. It is a very black trait of character. But I bear no malice. I shall expect you on Sunday morning. Mind that you

[1] Balzac's second sister.

[2] M. Dablin was a rich dealer in hardware living in the Rue Saint-Martin, with artistic tastes and a generous heart, who often assisted Balzac with his counsel and purse. The *Chouans* is dedicated to him. When he retired from business M. Dablin formed a collection of objects of art, which were much esteemed by amateurs, and when he died he bequeathed the most valuable of his specimens to the Museum of the Louvre.

are well up in the details of the exhibition of pictures: I want to ask you about it.

You are under the impression that I live a long way off. This is a philosophical error. Read Newton and you will find that I am within a stone's throw.

And our Latin, traitor! I am waiting for you to set me to work at it once more.

Adieu!

To M. Théodore Dablin, Paris.

Paris: September 1819.

Miserable little Father,—I did not see you yesterday. Must I treat you like Cerberus in Hades, to whom was thrown a little honey-cake? Must I write to you each time I want to see you?

I feel that, the profit being all on my side, I seem to be an interested person, although I am imbued with the idea that in friendship one ought to be under as little constraint as possible, so as not to make one's friendship a yoke, and thus create a wish to shake it off. It is sufficient for me to know that I am beloved in the Rue Saint-Martin; I ask no more. The way to delight me would be to bring the list of the newly-elected. I know about Grégoire,[1] but the rest?

[1] The Abbé Grégoire.

Give me the list of each department, with a little indication of the opinions which prevail in each. I write no more, in order to have all the more to say to you.

Adieu, Pylades Dablin.

You would be very good if you came on Tuesday; or if you cannot come before Sunday, send me the list by Mother Comin, who will bring it to me.

To Mdlle. Laure de Balzac, Villeparisis.

Paris: 1819.

My very dear and honoured Sister,—Yesterday (Sunday) I dined with my landlord; I afterwards played at little innocent games. I assure you they were very innocent, considering the foolish stupidity of nearly all the members of the honourable company. The little loves are doing well. 'Zaïre' is beginning to write legibly, but I shall never be able to make anything of her in literature.

Saturday, 30.—As it is one o'clock in the morning, Mother Antimèche is to come and take my prose this morning, and I am *re-Laurising* myself.

I have received your letter in which you say, 'Write, write, write.' You will see by the

above that I was thinking about the Villeparisians.

Now tell me whereabouts you are reading in Montesquieu, as you cite passages from him which I do not know. Happy the brothers whose sisters are Lauras! You send me news, as if I did not read the newspapers, and as if I really was at Alby; and you have actually wasted half a sheet of your letter in writing to me what mamma has already told me, what I have read, what I know. Let us talk of something else.

I have finally decided upon Cromwell, and I have chosen it because it is the finest subject in modern history.

Since I began to consider deeply about this matter I have flung myself into it both body and soul. Ideas crowd upon me and overwhelm me, but I am constantly hampered by my want of facility in writing verse. I shall have eaten all my finger-nails more than once before my first monument will have been achieved. If you only knew the difficulties of works like these!

The great Racine himself took two years to polish 'Phèdre,' that despair of poets. Two years!—two years! Do you realise all that lies in those words—two years?

But whilst I am consuming myself day and

night, how delightful it is to associate those who are dear to me with my labours! Ah, my sister, if Heaven has endowed me with any talent, my greatest joy will be to see my glory reflected upon all of you! What happiness to conquer oblivion, and to render the name of Balzac once more illustrious! At these thoughts my blood runs high. When a fine idea strikes me I seem to hear your voice saying to me, 'Courage! go on!'

I have entirely abandoned my comic opera; I should not have been able in my garret to find a composer. I ought not either to write for the taste of the moment, but follow the example of Racine and Corneille, and work, as they have done, for posterity! . . .

The second act was feeble, and the first act would have been too brilliant for music; and, when reflecting for reflection's sake, I prefer to reflect upon 'Cromwell.'

But usually two thousand lines go to the making of a tragedy; so think of the reflections! Pity me. What do I say? No, do not pity me, for I am happy; envy me rather, and think of me often.

I promise you that when my first act is nearly finished, and only the last finishing touch is needed, I will send it to you. But *motus*!—no jesting on

such a topic. I have been very much perplexed; and the reason is this (you are competent to judge of it), Strafford brings the Queen of England to Westminster.

But she is obliged to take off her royal clothes, in order to travel through the country, to reach London, and to be allowed to enter the palace. What ought to be her first impulse in this condition?

After much hesitation, I have given preference to humiliated pride. Only a woman can tell me if I am right. Ah, my dear sister, what torments are caused by the love of glory!

Hurrah for the *épiciers!* All day long they are selling something, and at night they count up their gains; from time to time they amuse themselves at some dreadful melodrama, and thus they are happy. Yes; but they pass their time amongst cheese and soap. Rather, by far, hurrah for men of letters! . . . Yes; but they are all poor as rats as regards money, and only rich in their contempt for others. Bah! let us leave them both alone, and hurrah for everybody!

You must know that I refresh myself, after my labours, by scratching in a little romance after the antique.[1] I do it word by word, thought by

[1] This romance never saw the light.

thought, or, rather, *ab hoc* and *ab hac*. I rarely leave the house; but when I take a ramble it shall be a cheerful stroll in Père la Chaise. I am waiting for the winter in order to work more closely.

The following is the present state of affairs, for which you were asking:—

Fine Arts.

I have no music! Naughty girl, you talk to me about pictures. How do you think I can go to the Musée while I am at Alby?

I waited yesterday for that traitor Dablin, to make him give me an account of the pictures now on view. I had set his chair ready . . . . which brought me ill-luck, for he did not come.

Out of Doors.

I have been met by M. de V—— and M. F——, from Villeparisis. If they have recognised me, say it was not me.

Though I would rather not be like anybody else!

Indoors.

I have eaten two melons. They must be paid for by living on nuts and dry bread.

Projects.

If some day you would only give me a rendez-vous on the banks of the Canal de l'Ourcq, near such or such a bridge! It would only be three hours' walking to find you, and three hours to return to my garret; then the 'Albigeois' would have seen all that he has dearest in the world! Think about it.

Meanwhile if you are able to find ideas for the situations in 'Cromwell,' write them to me. Now what troubles me the most is the first scene between the King and the Queen. Such a melancholy, tender, and touching tone should predominate, such pure and fresh thoughts, that I am in despair. It ought to be grand all through, like the 'Atala' of Girodet in painting. If you have an Ossianic fibre, send me some colours, dear, little, good, amiable, sweet sister, whom I love so much.

You must know that I have been writing to you whilst eating my dinner. After my letter was finished, I found around me about thirty mouthfuls begun. I am going to finish them.

Adieu. I embrace you, and I am your *loup-garou* of a brother.

To M. Théodore Dablin.

Paris : September 1819.

I have been meditating an oration on you in the style of Cicero against Catiline. What! one whole month without coming to *lesdiguièriser*, while I wither to a mummy, bake to a cinder, by not seeing you! But do not believe, O wicked man, that it is on your own account. No ; patriotic devotion takes the upper hand. I am an abridgement of Brutus. What of the Deputies? The lists of the newly elected? My dreams are of Dablin and Deputies.

In other respects I am not angry at the sparseness of your visits ; it shows that you are fully occupied. But you must know that for the last week I have been as if at the bottom of Hades : I have seen nothing, heard nothing ; no one has written to me. I have not even had a glimpse of Mother Comin. In short, I have been entirely alone with my poor wits, that have gone a wool-gathering.

'Cromwell' will blow the top of my head off.

I am so wearied out with English regicides that I intend to rest, my brain for a fortnight, to take nothing but my ease, in order that my head may be refreshed by October, the date I have

fixed for taking a plunge into the gulf of the tragedy, whence I shall not emerge until I brandish the first act in my hand. . . . I write on gilt-edged paper, as if you were my mistress. It is to induce you to come and see me. I beseech you, give Mother Comin a list of the new Deputies, with their politics. Adieu, Pylades.

To Mdlle. Laure de Balzac, Villeparisis.

Paris: October 1819.

My very dear and honoured Sister,—I seize the *godardienne*[1] opportunity to send you tidings of your scapegrace of a brother. . . . A fortnight has elapsed during which I have done nothing; I have let my field lie fallow. By way of compensation I have now sat up three nights at work again.

That abominable daddy has not come yet; the chair was set for him in vain; but I forgive him. I am not a Christian for the sake of what I may get (*pour des prunes*). Are you still working at your piano? I must tell you that we are making economies in order to have one here. When my mother and you come to see me you will find one installed, and 'Rousseau's Dream'[2]

[1] Godard was the name of a farmer who, when he brought his grain to Paris, did commissions for the Balzac family.

[2] A composition by Cramer, very much in vogue at that time.

shall be heard in my garret, where dreams are much needed.

Laura, my dear sister, how is it that you have not yet got hold of papa's Tacitus? Remember that I am relying upon you, who are as cunning as a gipsy, to get hold of it for the benefit of your brother. Of course if it were ever used I would not ask for it; but it is like a diamond in a shrine—only to be gazed at. Absolutely I must have it. My father cannot want it now that he is deep in China or in the Bible. Nothing can be more simple than to find the key of the book-case. Papa is not always at home; he walks out every day. 'The message-bearing Iris' has come to fetch my letter, but my conscience will not allow me to send you such a scrap. I shall put you into a drawer till another day, and mind you are not stifled!

Saturday, 30th, since it is one o'clock in the morning.

I do not like your historical studies and your diagrams century by century. Why amuse yourself (the word is ill chosen) by doing over again what Blair has done already? Take him down from the book-case—he cannot be far from Tacitus—and learn him by heart. Though what good would that be? A young girl knows

enough when she knows the names of all the great men ancient and modern, when she does not confound Hannibal with Cæsar, nor take Thrasymene for a general, nor Pharsalia for a Roman lady. Read Plutarch, and two or three books of that calibre, and you will be grounded for the rest of your life, without derogating from your charming title of—Woman. Would you become a blue-stocking? Fie! fie! I am going to take on me the dignity of an elder brother, and scold you. Seriously, it is no jesting matter. Anyone, to read your letter, would take me for a Richelieu, in love with thirty-six women at once! My heart is not so capacious; and excepting yourself, whom I love to distraction, I love only one person at a time. This Laura tries to make me out a Lovelace! If I were an Adonis there might be something to say. I have a swelled face.

Saturday, 10 o'clock in the morning.

As you take an interest in me, I may tell you I have slept well. How could it be otherwise when I dreamed of you, of mamma, of all my loves and hopes, and, in awakening, gave my first thought to you? The news of my *ménage* is disastrous. That rascal Moi-même is every day more negligent. Hard work does not con-

duce to cleanliness. Moi-même never goes out more than once in three or four days to make purchases; he goes to the nearest shops—which are the worst in the neighbourhood; the others are too far off—and the rascal is economical of his trouble. The consequence is that your brother (destined to fame) is already living like a great man—that is to say, he is dying of hunger.

With the Tacitus don't forget to send me a rug. If you could add to it an oldest of all old shawls, it would come in very useful. You laugh? It is the very thing I want to complete my nocturnal apparel. My legs, which suffer most from the cold, were my first thought. I wrap those in the Tourangese 'carrick,' which Grogniart,[1] of needle-plying memory, botched up (*cousillonna*). The aforesaid carrick not coming higher than my waist, the upper man is left but ill protected from the frost, which has only the roof-tiling and a jacket of soft worsted to penetrate in order to reach your brother's skin —too tender, alas! to bear with it. As to my head, I reckon on a Dantesque skull-cap to enable it to brave the north wind. Thus equipped, I shall find my palace a most agreeable abode.

[1] A small tailor at Tours, who used to fit Balzac with his father's clothes, and pleased him but ill at it.

I wind up this letter as Cato wound up his harangues. He exclaimed, 'Let Carthage be destroyed!' My exclamation is, 'Let Tacitus be seized!'

And I am, dear historian, the very humble servant of your four foot eight inches.

You don't know it, but my conscience feels a positive pang of remorse at having left M. de Villiers,[1] who loves us so much, out of our secret. I know of no one to whom he would be likely to betray us; and, moreover, I have full faith in his discretion. I have reflected that, after so laborious a winter as I am about to pass, a few days in the country will be highly needful. No, mamma, it is not to escape from *ma bonne vache enragée.* I like my hard lines. But some one at your elbow will tell you that exercise and plenty of fresh air are very conducive to the health of man. Now, since Honoré cannot show himself at his father's, why should he not pay a visit to good M. de Villiers, who loves him even to the extent of harbouring the rebel? A thought, mother: suppose you wrote to him to settle all about this journey? Come, the thing seems already done; for, with all

[1] The Abbé de Villiers, a friend of the Balzacs who lived in retirement at Nogent, a little village near l'Ile Adam, Seine-et-Oise.

your air of severity, we know how good you are at heart, and we are only half afraid of you.

You wished for a long letter: I hope this one will reckon for something. I sometimes am sulky (*bousard*) with myself, and pout my lips in dudgeon. My good mamma is not here to say so, but I am the dupe of my own fancies—one moment gay, the next in the clouds. I am too changeable, and must shake off my own bad company.

I have had a game of boston downstairs, and a boston *a piccolo* too, and I have won three francs! If I don't take care, the lures of society will lay a hold on me. The said boston made me think of ours at home, consequently of you also. I lost all the time while I was so thinking.

My letters are *macédoines*. I talk of a score of different subjects on the same page.

When will you come and see me, warm yourself at my fire, drink my coffee, eat my scrambled eggs, for which you will have to bring a dish?

Adieu, *soror!* I hope to have a letter *sororis*, to answer *sorori*, to see *sororem*, then, *o soror!* but I shall also see the departure, *sorore!* Answer me at the same length I write to you.

My face-ache is much better to-day. Alas! perhaps in a few years I shall only be able to

eat bread crumb, *bouillie*, and old people's food I shall be obliged to scrape my radishes like grandmamma. It is in vain you say, 'Have it pulled out;' I prefer leaving it to Nature herself. Have the wolves dentists?

To M. Théodore Dablin.

Paris: November 1819.

My dear Daddy,—You never came; the chair was again set in its place in vain.

I want a very complete Latin Bible, with the French translation on the opposite page, if possible. I do not want the New Testament; I have one.

By the way, if Girodet sends his 'Endymion' to the exhibition, oblige me by procuring a ticket for the day when no one is supposed to be there.

P.S.—You would make me happier still if you would make use of M. Pépin-Lehalleur, and procure me a pit ticket for the Français some day when 'Cinna' is performed.

I have never yet seen a single piece performed of my old general's, Corneille. This is wrong in a young soldier.

To Mdlle. Laure de Balzac, Villeparisis.

1820.

My dear Sister,—I commence by telling you that I love you with all my heart, and that I em-

brace you, lest I should forget it in the course of my letter. I may vaunt myself with *Petit-Jean*, and say—

Ce que je sais le mieux, c'est mon commencement.[1]

Ah! Laura, *soror*! what torments are mine! I shall address a petition to the Pope to reserve me the first vacant niche appropriated to martyrs. I have just discovered in my regicide a bad construction, and it swarms with halting verses. I am to-day a veritable *pater dolorosus*. I have hit upon a loophole for escape which scarcely pleases me. Oh! if I am a Pradon, let me hang myself! Whenever you see a bad line, write in the margin, ''Ware the gibbet!' I devour our four classical writers of tragedy. Crébillon gives me confidence, Voltaire terrifies me, Corneille delights me, Racine makes me lay down my pen.

I must tell you that I am very angry with you. What, mademoiselle! call your brother a giddy pate? He is usually called a ninny-hammer; this is more graphic. However, I am yet to learn why you called me giddy. I know not what nonsense daddy[2] has been talking about you this morning, and St. Cloud, and the month of October, and a jaunt; all I hope is that you will not

[1] What I know best is how I shall begin.

[2] M. Dablin.

put a stop to the little dinner breakfast in the Rue Lesdiguières.

I see nothing of Iris Comin except on the wing, when she is always out of breath, although riding on her rainbow of a basket filled with potatoes.

Thanks for your affectionate messages and your provisions. I recognised your hand in the jar of preserves and the flowers. Do your liqueurs succeed?

I am like N—— asking in this way after food (*balagoinfre*); but my tooth-ache prevents my eating, so I feast on words. Do you think of me as much as I think of you? You are *emmalusifying*[1] yourselves; and I—well, I'm amused at your emmalusification.

Make a collection of all the *hélas*! of your aunt Malus; report to me the burthen of all her sighings.

I look to you for a laugh; you are my good Momus, for I can imagine I am making one at your state dinner; your stories are the manna of my wilderness.

You ask for news; I must manufacture some. Not a soul calls on me in my garret. I can only,

[1] A word invented by the Balzac family, meaning they were seeing much of a family called Malus. M. Malus was Balzac's uncle.

therefore, speak of myself, and can send you nothing but nonsensical fables.

Example :—

A poor young fellow's head caught fire at 9 Rue Lesdiguières, and the firemen were unable to extinguish it. It was kindled by a beautiful lady who is unknown to him. Rumour says that she lives at the Quatre-Nations, the other end of the Pont des Arts; her name is Glory.

The misfortune is that the incendiarised youth argues over his case, and soliloquises thus:—

Whether I have genius or not, I am in either case laying myself out for a multitude of sorrows.

Without genius, I am done for! All my life will be a sense of unsatisfied yearnings, miserable jealousies, grievous hardships!

If I have genius, I shall be persecuted, calumniated; although I know very well that in that case Miss Glory will wipe away many a tear.

I shall leave you now, and go to sleep. I have spent the night in deadly agony and torture. I am going to fill my mind with some pretty dream or another, of which I shall give you an account when I quit the arms of Madame Morpheus. Farewell, Laura = Dussek = Grétry = Balzac, charming sister! I am laughing like any hunch-

back as I embrace you. It is the beauty of philosophy that she can make you forget the sharpest pangs of grief. I am asleep.

. . . . To-day I realise the truth that riches do not constitute happiness, and the period of my residence here will be to me hereafter a source of happy recollection. To be able to live after my own fancy—to work according to my taste and after my own fashion—to shut my eyes to the future, which I paint in lovely colours—to think of you and know that you are happy—to have for a mistress the Julie of Rousseau—to have La Fontaine and Molière for my friends, Racine for my master, and Père la Chaise to take my walks in!

Oh, if this could only last for ever!

My only anxiety arises from my desire to distinguish myself, and all my sorrows come from the lack of talent which I discover in myself. As for you, you can by practice increase the skill of your fingers; but all the labour in the world will not give one a grain of genius. I leave you now to take a stroll in Père la Chaise, to make there some studies in sorrow. Tell papa and mamma how much I love them. You only can express my feelings. I leave the rest till my next. Adieu, Mdlle. Petrarch. Your *grigou* of a brother.

Much love to Laurentia. I will never write

to you again. I spend all my time in chattering to you, which could be better employed in working for our mutual glory—*if!*

To Mdlle. Laure de Balzac, Villeparisis.

Paris : September 1820.

I have, *ma chère bonne*, taken a decided course with 'Cromwell.' Now that all is irrevocably fixed I have resolved to work at it in a different way. It is to be finished in five or six months, but roughly at a single sitting, because I wish to be able, the picture being once outlined, to lay on the colour at leisure. Perhaps I may send you, by the end of November or at the beginning of October, *the first act.* I hope you will be able to snip, slash, and hack at it at your ease and pleasure.

I am beginning to sit up of nights comfortably enough, but the cold *nips me* (*me pipe*) (one of papa's words), and I shall make the acquisition of an old office arm-chair, which will at any rate protect my sides and back. Say nothing to my dear mother about my nocturnal labours, and don't speak to me about them yourself either. I must and will, though I should burst over it, come to an end with 'Cromwell,' and finish something before mamma comes and calls me to account for my time.

I am more strongly inclined than ever towards the career I have chosen, for a crowd of reasons, of which I shall only enumerate those that you might not, perhaps, perceive for yourself. We are far from being at the end of our revolutions; from the aspect of affairs at present I foresee many a storm yet to come. Good or bad, the representative system makes a call for the highest order of talent. Distinguished writers will necessarily be sought out in any political crisis. Do they not possess science, a spirit of observation, and a profound knowledge of the human heart?

If I have the true metal in me (though that remains to be ascertained), I may one day achieve something besides literary fame; and to add to the title of an eminent writer that of an eminent citizen, is an object of ambition which may be allowed to tempt a man. Nothing, nothing but love and glory can ever fill all the vast space there is in my heart, and within which you yourself are conveniently lodged.

Dear sister, my good, kind Laura, I should like to see you all richly bestowed, that I might no longer be plagued about my future destiny. There is in this matter a trifle of egotism, perhaps, but I shall be forgiven for the sake of the amount of good it would produce.

Therefore in my desire for the success of my design concerning 'Cromwell' there is a grain of self-interest; and I treat my poor tragedy like coffee-grounds. I calculate what I shall distil from it, to make myself *independent.* I am like Perrette with her pitcher of milk, and the comparison will perhaps be only too well realised.

If such a thing as genius were to be bought at Villeparisis, I would say, Buy me as much of it as you can; but, alas! it is neither sold, bought, nor given, and I want some terribly.

Dear sister, think of me; it is all I ask of you. Fair and tender-hearted maid, sighing after the Petrarch of Languedoc, try to light upon him in modern guise, with a rent-roll of four thousand a year and the post of Director-General.

Farewell.

To Mdlle. Laure de Balzac, Villeparisis.

Sent with the plot of the tragedy of 'Cromwell.'
For yourself alone.

Paris: 1820.

Dear Laura,—No paltry gift, is it, nor any trifling proof of my friendship, that I here present, in admitting you to be a witness of the birth-throes of genius? Laugh at me, if you will.

As the play is as yet only a sketch, I have left a margin whereon I allow you to inscribe your sublime observations. Notwithstanding the great licence I give, I beg you, mademoiselle, to read with respect the plan of the young Sophocles. To think that people may read in an hour what it has sometimes cost years to write!

Act I.

Henrietta of England, overwhelmed with fatigue and disguised in humble habiliments, enters Westminster, supported by the son of Strafford. She is returning from a long journey. She has been to Holland, by order of Charles I., to take her children there, and to solicit the assistance of the Court of France. Strafford, in tears, informs her of the latest events. The King, a prisoner in Westminster, accused by the Parliament, awaits his sentence. You will understand how the Queen is stirred at this intelligence; she is bent on sharing the fate of her husband.

Enter Cromwell and his son-in-law, Ireton. They have appointed this spot to meet the conspirators. The Queen, terrified, conceals herself behind a royal tomb.

The conspirators arrive, and she overhears them debate whether the King shall be put to

death or not. A very violent scene, in which Fairfax (an honest fellow) defends the life of the illustrious prisoner and unmasks the ambition of Cromwell. The latter dissipates the suspicion of his followers. After which they decide on the penalty of death.

The Queen rises from her place of concealment and makes them a tremendous speech. Cromwell and his friends let her have her say, delighted to have secured the victim they wanted. He goes out with his accomplices to secure the success of their plans, and the Queen proceeds to visit the prisoner.

Act II.

Charles I., alone, passes in review the facts and occurrences of his reign. What a soliloquy!

The Queen enters. Here again talent will be in considerable demand! Conjugal love in this scene makes up the whole bill of fare. It should blaze and glow through the entire piece. There must prevail throughout this painful interview a tone so melancholy and so tender that I already despair; it simply implies reaching the sublime.

Cromwell comes to fetch the King, to bring him before the court. Another difficult scene, where the characters of three interlocutors so

different from each other must be brought into relief. A difficult historical study.

Strafford comes to inform the Queen that a small army of Royalists have seized Cromwell's sons, returning from the subjugation of Ireland.

By placing Cromwell in a cleft stick between his sons and the Crown, the King may perhaps be saved. The act ends with this gleam of hope.

Act III.

Cromwell waits on the Queen. The latter explains what you already know, and forces on him the alternative of declaring himself one way or the other. Great struggle in the inward soul of the Protector. The King enters and announces to Cromwell that he has ordered his sons to be set free unconditionally. Cromwell quits the stage, leaving the spectator in suspense. Some other scenes between the Queen, the King, and afterwards Strafford, who urges upon the King that he is bringing himself under the axe again. All proceed to Westminster.

Act IV.

Cromwell enters. Ambition takes the upper hand. The Parliament assembles. The King

appears before it, and speaks for the first and last time in a tone. . . . (Here is the place to be sublime!) The Queen, roused to indignation, comes forward and defends (Heaven knows how eloquently) her devil of a husband. Cromwell, seeing that Parliament is softened, orders the King and Queen to withdraw, that they may deliberate. At the moment the guards are leading them away the Queen makes a last effort to prevail with Cromwell; she offers him honours, titles, &c. Cromwell remains unmoved. The Queen leaves the stage in despair.

Act V. (*and the most difficult of all*).

The sentence is not yet known; but Charles I., who entertains no false hopes, confers with the Queen on the subject of his last wishes. (What a scene!) Strafford has learnt the King's doom, and comes to announce it to his master, that he may be prepared before the sentence is read to him. (What a scene!) Ireton enters to fetch the King and to bring him before his judges. Charles I. tells Strafford that he reserves for him the honour of attending him to the scaffold. Farewell scene between the King and the Queen. (What a scene!) Fairfax enters hastily. He warns the Queen of her danger. She must fly instantly. It is

intended to detain her as a prisoner, and to bring her also to trial.

The Queen, absorbed in her grief, at first hears not a word of this, then suddenly she bursts forth in imprecations against England. She will live for vengeance; she will stir up enemies against her in all directions. France shall go to war with her, prevail over her, and eventually crush her.

This will be the *feu de joie*, and I promise you it shall be touched with the hand of a master.

Thereupon the pit, bathed in tears, will go home to bed.

Shall I have sufficient talent? I intend my tragedy to be the breviary of nations and of kings.

I must start with a *chef-d'œuvre* or twist my neck.

I entreat you in the name of our fraternal love never to say, 'That is good.' Discover my faults only; as for the beauties, I know all about them.

Should any thoughts strike you as you go along, write them on the margin. Never mind the pretty things; I only want the sublime.

It is impossible you should not find this plot superb. 'What a splendid exhibition! How the

interest rises from scene to scene! The incident of Cromwell's sons is admirably ingenious. I have also been very happy in devising the character of Strafford's son. The magnanimity of Charles I., restoring the sons of Cromwell to him, is finer than that of Augustus pardoning Cinna.

There are indeed a few defects here and there, but I shall remove them.

I was so worked upon by all that you wrote, that I felt as much moved as if it had been over some line in 'Cromwell.'

If only the Château[1] does not forbid my tragedy!

If I were to give way to my feelings I should fill a ream of paper writing to you; but there is 'Cromwell! Cromwell!' calling me.

What costs me most thought is the description. That young jackanapes Strafford must draw the portrait of the regicide, and Bossuet is a phantom in my path.

No matter; I have already done a verse or two, which are not so badly turned.

Ah, sister! sister! what hopes! and what disappointment, perhaps!

[1] The 'Château' in those days meant the Tuileries.

To Madame Surville,[1] *Bayeux.*

Villeparisis : June 1821.

If you wish to know exactly what is the situation of affairs here, picture to yourself first papa pacing up and down his room immediately after having the paper read to him ; next mamma in her bed, who will not yet allow that she is cured of an imaginary inflammation of the lungs; Laurentia by her side ; and lastly your dear brother writing in front of the fireplace on the little piece of furniture that used formerly to support your writing-desk. I have just come from the Ile Adam, and I cannot be expected to be so well up in all that has happened as to write at any length.

But what I can tell you is this : that I think of you often. You know there are certain words which I take up and drop again every new moon. Well, for the last six weeks my word has been 'And Bayeux ?' But *mordicus* it shall remain for ever, moons notwithstanding.

A piece of news that will make a sensation down in the country is the laying down of sand in Laurentia's arbour and in our fore-court.

The day before yesterday was the festival of

[1] In May 1820 Laura de Balzac married M. Surville, an engineer in the *Ponts et Chaussées* department. *La Vieille Fille* is dedicated to M. Surville.

Villeparisis—a gloomy affair enough to us. So was not the last festival. In those days there was a young troubadour who hovered round Mademoiselle Laure. At the present date complete absence of troubadours. I hope you mean to describe your apartments, that we may see you there trotting, straightening, rummaging, as you may, in your imagination, behold us circling, trotting, roaming, about the house. Tell us, please, what sort of a town is that which calls itself Bayeux—whether it be like any other place; if there be men there and women; what may be the costume of the natives, their mode of speech, manners, and customs.

Yesterday we saw M. Auguste Perrault, who complains that Surville has not written a word to him about his letters of introduction. He wishes to know if your husband has made any use of them, if he thinks they will bring forth any good results, if —if—— &c. I say all this by order. We told him that for the first few days after settling down in the country there were things to be done which precluded all possibility of writing, and that Surville was very busy.

Dear sister, I am told that you urge my coming to see you. You know I am snapt up for the summer, and I promised you should have me

next March. I shall keep my word; but for the present Dr. Nacquart packs me off to Touraine. I thank you none the less kindly for your invitation; be well assured that the most mighty motives must come into play ere I am prevented setting off to keep you company.

Farewell, dear sister. I embrace you with all my heart. Friendly remembrances to Surville, who goes halves with you in all I have said.

Laurentia puts in a claim for her share of the paper. I must not be a step-brother (*frérâtre*) and rob her of her lines. Farewell, then.

To Madame Surville, Bayeux.

Villeparisis: June 1821.

Dear Sister,— . . . . What you tell me about your low spirits surprises me. I thought you were more of a philosopher! What, my sister, do you not know that fretting is of no earthly use? Even if your melancholy were increased a hundredfold, would these hundred and one doses of chagrin remove one single mile-stone on the road that separates Bayeux from Paris? or would they abridge by one fraction the seventy leagues, which I curse from my heart because they separate you from us? I should blame you much if you were to forget us, for we are all eminently worthy of re-

membrance; but I blame you equally when I see you so depressed at our separation, because, in one word, which is as good as a hundred, this wretch Melancholy does nothing to bring us into each other's presence.

Oh, what a great man and an honest citizen was Roger Bontemps! Conform to his precepts, dear sister: be merry, take comfort; send that brilliant imagination of yours on its travels; set it a task; devise plans; fancy yourself possessed of Astolfo's steed; mount him and gallop off to Villeparisis; calmness and content will be yours once more, at least so long as the journey lasts. Do not write to us in so doleful a strain; it gives me a longing to set off to Bayeux, to line your cupboards with paper, scrutinise your internal arrangements, your inlaid parquets, your lamps, and perhaps even to see Madame Surville herself. . . .

You have to bear the sorrow of separation from your family. Have we not to endure that of no longer seeing you among us, laughing, skipping, gambolling, wrangling, chattering? Have I not to bear (you see self creeps always in), to be, at the age of twenty-two, without independence, with neither prospect nor position, subject to endless vexations? . . .

Fortunately within the last fortnight I have hit upon a plan for securing to myself one hundred thousand crowns, to be extracted from the public purse; I am to receive the same by instalments in exchange for a certain number of novels, for which at Bayeux there will be an enormous demand.

Talking of Bayeux, can you explain why the street you live in should be called *Rue Teinture?* Not a shadow of a reason has yet dawned upon me.

There is a piece of news which the papers are not likely to give except imperfectly.

The anniversary of the death of poor Lallemand was to have been celebrated by a funeral service. When the students came to St. Eustache the doors were closed; a strip of paper pasted up, as when a theatrical performance is put off, announced that, by command of the authorities, the service would not take place. The young fellows added in pencil that, 'in accordance with the present excessive freedom of worship, the friends of the deceased were invited to assemble at the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle, and thence to proceed to Père la Chaise.' By pure chance there came to the rendezvous seven or eight thousand persons, all in black coats. But the garrison of Paris and the gendarmerie guarded the approaches to the ceme-

tery. The students attempted to break through in defiance of orders. An officer gave the word to fire; the gendarmes refused to obey; and a young man (a desperado, say the ultras) had himself lifted from hand to hand over the heads of the crowd till he reached the officer who had given the order to fire; then, baring his breast, he said, 'If you want another victim, strike here. I am ready, for I know that my death will serve the cause of freedom.' 'Bravo!' shouted the crowd. 'Long live the soldiers! Long live the gendarmes!' Thereupon the crowd betook themselves to an adjoining field, formed a circle, and a student, in the midst of the most solemn silence, delivered an address, at the close of which all present swore to return the following year, 'wearing black for our lost liberties.' After this they all departed, walking two and two, raising their hats as they passed the house of M. Camille Jordan, who had died the evening before, and also as they passed the house of young Lallemand.[1] This solemnity has caused a great sensation in Paris.

Let me tell you in confidence that our poor mother is becoming like grandmamma, and may be

[1] Lallemand was a young law student who was shot on June 3, 1820, in the Place du Carrousel by a soldier of the Royal Guard in the midst of a meeting of the people, occasioned by an unpopular measure.

worse. It was only yesterday I again heard her complaining like grandmamma; fidgetting about the evening chills like grandmamma; taking grudges against Laurentia or Honoré; changing her mind with the suddenness of lightning, &c. &c.—all like grandmamma. Perhaps it is the very fear that my mother should fall into this weakness which makes me see things in this light. What most distresses me is the morbid sensibility which prevails at home. Though there are but four of us we are like a small town; we watch one another like Montécuculli and Turenne. For instance, the other day I came back weary and worried from Paris, and never thought of thanking mamma, who had had a black coat made for me. At my age such gifts hardly make the same impression as of old, although it would not have given me much trouble to appear touched by her kindness, especially as I knew it had been a sacrifice; but I forgot what I ought to have remembered. Mamma sulked, and you know what an air and what a countenance she has on these occasions. I was amazed, and pricked up my ears to find out what I had done. Fortunately Laurentia came and told me what was the matter, and two or three graceful words brightened up the face of mamma. This is a mere nothing, a drop of water,

but it will give you a sample of our ways. Ah, we are tremendous originals in this holy family of ours. What a pity I cannot put ourselves into novels.

I hope that, better than all the descriptions in the world, this will carry you back amongst us all. Alas! how comes it we do not exercise a little indulgence in our mode of life, instead of always seeking where a wound can be inflicted? No one will consent to live in that state of *open frankness* (*bonne flanquette* [1]) that papa, you, and I used to live in. I think Surville also would have been one of us. Nothing so offends me as to see those immensely demonstrative people who stifle one in their embraces, who scream at one's egotism if one wards off their exaggerated nonsense, and who cannot form the smallest conception of any inward sentiment that refuses to show itself.

Here's an expenditure of brilliancy. I don't know myself again. You and I are together; let us leave cleverness aside and stick to the affection we have ever had for one another.

Ah! ah! it would seem that my fine scrawls are rather a take-in for the Post Office; they cheat it of at least three sheets of paper; but our Govern-

[1] A malaprop of which Balzac was very fond. *A la bonne flanquette* is a countrified expression for open speaking.

ment is not liberal enough to induce me to write in large hand. I am not like you, who make your letters so large that they look like the inscription outside an inn, except that they are not printed. You might have put three times as much matter into your three pages. You are not aware that Laurentia has taken a violent fancy to Augustus de L——. Say nothing that might lead them to suspect I have betrayed the secret, but I have had all the trouble in the world to get it into her head that authors are the most villanous of matches (in respect of fortune, be it understood). Really Laurentia is quite romantic. How she would hate me if she knew with what irreverence I allude to her tender attachment. Oh, the curse of money! But don't be anxious: if I should chance to turn out a man of talent, I mean to heap up enough money for all of us.

You may write to me once more at Villeparisis before I start for Touraine; I don't go till the 28th or 30th of June. I will write to you myself once or twice during my expedition.

What more have I to say? That I think of you, I will not say continually, but sufficiently often, especially towards the end of dinner. It is a habit I have; and, as we dine at about the same hour as you do, you may about dessert time say to

yourself, 'Honoré is thinking of us. He is a very good fellow, is that boy. If his letter were sent to the press it would make thirty pages of print.' Great Heaven! why didn't I put it into my novel? It would have been so much ground got over. But you know that when I write to you I chatter like a magpie with one eye, and cast off my accustomed taciturnity. May my letter enliven you. Heaven grant you may be sad no more!

And now farewell, sister. Get up out of our easy chair and show your brother out, who is now standing at your drawing-room door. 'Look how well the lamps burn.' 'Yes, don't they?' Ah, that clock is tastefully designed.' 'Now mind you are coming to dinner. Take care not to lose your way about Bayeux.' 'Pshaw! you can send round the crier with his drum for me.' 'Five o'clock, mind.' 'Yes.' 'Well,' says Surville, who meets me as I am going out, 'you are going to take a walk?' 'Yes.' 'Wait a moment; I'll come with you.'

Oh! the pity it should only be a dream!

Farewell, then. I embrace you affectionately.

To Madame Surville.

Paris: 1821.

It is difficult when I write to you not to touch upon the subject of the troubadour,[1] and you will have as many versions of the story as you receive letters. We have seen the whole family, not omitting even a niece, who is charming.

But let us proceed in due order.

The grandmamma is a little, dried-up old woman, said to be mighty amiable. Imagine a woman half-way between Madame de Castan and our grandmamma, with something of both, and you will have a tolerably exact idea of her. The mother I have not beheld with my own eyes, but it seems she is a woman of the highest breeding and quick as gunpowder. She embraced Laurentia with cordiality, unusual in the race of mothers-in-law. I wish I may have such another. She tells her what her son has said in her praise, and finds it all more than deserved. I should imagine her to be nervous, and I pity those who live with nervous people. There is also a sister-in-law, who has passed the age of love-making, and is consequently up to the chin in piety; but she is said not

[1] Mademoiselle Laurence de Balzac was about to be married to M. de Montzaigle, and Honoré jestingly gives this name to her intended.

to look her years and to be truly amiable. There is a second sister, who is married to an auditor of the Council of State, who will one day have 30,000 francs a year. This one is very pretty, amiable, and not stiff. I have not seen her myself, but I have seen the brother-in-law, a pretty little man with a full-moon face. In short, if there is a Paradise on earth it certainly is the family into which Laurentia is about to enter, if it so please Heaven.

Yesterday we saw Laurentia's future aunt, the second daughter of her intended husband's grandmother, Madame Cassière, the wife of the Director of the Commissariat—you may have heard papa speak of her—and it is she who has the pretty daughter whom I mentioned at the beginning of my letter.

If you, in your town of Bayeux and your Rue Teinture, wish to form an idea of what she is like, you have only to put both your hands over your lovely brown eyes and call up in your recollection the image of that little lady from M. de M——, one of his nieces who is so pretty, but whose name I forget. Imagine her face embellished by a divine smile, a figure somewhat taller, fuller, and more gracefully moulded, and you will have an accurate notion of the future cousin.

Lastly comes the intended husband himself. He is a little taller than Surville; he has a commonplace face, neither ugly nor handsome; his upper jaw is bereft of teeth, which ages him considerably. In other respects, as husbands go, he is rather better than worse. He writes verses. He is a wonderful shot. He has never attended more than two matches, and he carried off the prize on each occasion. He is also one of the most expert of billiard-players. He hunts; he drives; he—he—he—in short, you must perceive that all these talents, when possessed by one man and carried to the highest degree of perfection, must naturally inspire and excuse a certain amount of self-sufficiency; and this is the case with him up to a certain point, which point is not exactly the lowest in the barometer of vanity. But, as in our celestial family we are all pretty well provided with that quality, we scarcely notice it in him. Indeed, we say that when a man does everything so well he may be allowed to have a good conceit of himself. He wishes Laurentia to be happy. The absence of a piano will be compensated by diamond earrings. The *corbeille* will be beautiful. In short, all goes upon wheels, and those wheels are smooth and steady.

Mamma finds that her future son-in-law con-

ducts himself admirably—very admirably. He always embraces mamma, and has never yet kissed Laurentia except on the day of the betrothal.

On the whole you know that Laurentia is as beautiful as a picture—that she has the prettiest of arms and hands, that her complexion is pale and lovely. In conversation people give her credit for plenty of sense, and find that it is all a natural sense, which is not yet developed. She has beautiful eyes, and though pale many men admire that; and I have no doubt she will be very happily married. Grandmamma is in a great state of delight; papa is quite satisfied—so am I—so are you. As to mamma, recall the last days of your own *demoisellerie*, and you will have some idea of what Laurentia and I have to endure. Nature surrounds all roses with thorns; mamma follows of nature.

'Henry is not happy. That child is being fagged; he will never do anything: he must he sent to another school. He is with a canting set; his education will be spoiled. They keep the children in; they crush them with punishments for mere trifles, &c. &c.'

You are to understand it is mamma who is speaking.

I have in my eye a little room I can move

into on the 15th of this month, for I decidedly must shut myself up: my work will go on all the better.

I am in hopes of being able to sell a novel every month for six hundred francs; this will be enough to rub along with till affluence comes, which I shall be delighted to share with you all; for that it will come, I make no earthly doubt.

I pity mamma's malady very much. There is no one in the world to tell her of it. It would make her the most wretched of women were she to suspect that while she fancies she is doing everything for the happiness of those around her she does the contrary.

Farewell. I embrace you with all my heart, and earnestly beseech you to fight against your nervous feelings. My kind remembrance to Surville.

You said you were reading 'Clarissa Harlowe;' try and read 'Julie' next. I strongly advise you to read 'Kenilworth,' Walter Scott's last novel; it is the finest thing in the world.

My novel is finished; I hold the last chapters in my hands. I will send it to you on condition that you do not lend it, but as a matter of course vaunt it as a masterpiece. You will feel that under existing circumstances I can neither go to Bayeux nor visit Touraine; and if I quit the

paternal mansion it is because I am obliged to work at novels which require research and assiduous labour.

To Madame Surville.

Villeparisis: 1821.

My dear Sister,—Laurentia ought to be able to tell you more in two lines than I could in a long discourse. She being one of the interested parties, would naturally find better words. I am but a simple spectator, and, up to the present moment, the only observation that I can make is that the action of this drama does not proceed quickly enough. I want to see the winding up, and consequently the altar.

At last my impatience has been pacified by the signing of the contract. A soirée was given on this occasion, at which there were ices, relations, friends, plenty of acquaintances even, cakes, sweetmeats, and other good things, among which must be counted Henry,[1] some rarities, such as Cousin M——. All these were contained in our little drawing-room, talking, moving about, staring, and admiring the *corbeille*. I have only seen a future sister-in-law of Laurentia, who is as beautiful as an angel of Paradise, straight as a reed, and

[1] The youngest of Madame de Balzac's four children.

very engaging. She has bewitched me—really and truly. You want to know the minutest details, and you address yourself to me—to me, the most sorrowful of men, the most melancholy, the most unhappy of all the unhappy persons who vegetate under this celestial vault, *que l'Eternel a brillantée de ses mains puissantes.* . . . 'What sorrows can I have?' Well, it is a sorrowful litany that cannot be touched on during these days of merrymaking. I shall wait for the first fast-day that comes in the calendar before I speak. In this frame of mind how can you expect me to tell you of all the numberless little events that go on here?

The troubadour comes every day to breakfast, to dine, and to pay assiduous court. Nevertheless I do not find in his ways, smiles, words, actions, or gestures anything which marks affection as I understand it. Now, on my soul and conscience, I would not marry a girl who did not make me love her with much love. From all this many deep thoughts have arisen in my mind as to the way in which such an engagement is entered upon.

I have no doubt, however, but that Laurentia will be happy, for she marries an amiable man, who is clever and who has a happy temper; but, as I believe that everyone ought to feel in the social state, as it is in nature, the result of one combined

harmony, I shall desire to find this sympathetic harmony if ever I marry.

Presents, gifts, useless objects, two, three, or four months of courtship, do not make happiness; it is a solitary flower, very difficult to find; and yet one is so unhappy alone, so unhappy in society, so unhappy when dead, so unhappy whilst alive, that one must not be too particular about its colour.

You see I am not always merry.

To Madame Surville.

Paris: 1822.

My dear Sister,—I must tell you that I am in a state of delight, for 'L'Héritière de Birague' has been sold for eight hundred francs. And we are certain of the sale of the *first* copy, for grandmamma intends to buy it. But, on the other hand, I am ill, because I have a cough which tears my poor little body to pieces; yet I am glad, because my next novel is to be sold for a thousand francs. I am sorry, because I am so battered. The frigate 'La Honoré' has been so much knocked about in this first voyage that it is necessary to return to Villeparisis to refit.

I do not ask you if you are very busy, as you have a guest who appears to enjoy herself at

Bayeux. In all ways I have behaved with negligence towards grandmamma, to whom I have not written once; but I am going to address a half-sheet of affectionate things to her.

I am making the grandest projects in the world. When my novels are worth two thousand francs I shall take a wise and faithful wife, if I can, and set up a pretty little house, all new and varnished like a German toy. In truth, an author ought to be married; thus Madame de Balzac the younger will be very happy. Do, pray, come back to Paris, because by the time I have reached that point you must have the goodness to choose her for me. She must be on your model; otherwise I do not want her. . . . So pray be on the look-out to find your own likeness some five or eight years hence.

Alas! I forgot that I ought to have begun my letter with an imprecation upon all sisters. . . . Oh! naughty sister! Oh! sister who does not write! Oh! sister who neglects her brother!

Post time is come; I am stupid, I am ill, and I love you—four reasons for ending my letter.

I embrace you a thousand and a thousand times.

To Madame Surville.

(Fragment of a letter, without a beginning.)

Villeparisis: 1822.

. . . . . .

As to papa, he is a pyramid of Egypt, immovable amid the rocking of the world, growing younger, &c. &c., whilst mamma, always on the road to Paris, makes up by her activity for papa's immobility. Henry is either a jewel or a scatterbrain, which you like; I declare I have no idea which he is. Our poor dear father has had a terrible accident. He went to Paris a fortnight ago to receive the visits of Madame de Montzaigle and of the grandmother. In spite of our remonstrances he insisted upon returning immediately to Villeparisis. While he was in the carriage he had his left eye lacerated and injured by the lash of the coachman's whip. What an omen—a coachman's whip to touch this grand old age, the joy and pride of us all! At first we thought the harm done was more than happily was the case. My father's apparent calm troubled me; I would rather have heard complaints; and I thought complaints would be a relief. But he is so justly proud of his moral courage that I dared not attempt to console him,

and one feels the suffering of an old man as one would that of a woman.

I could neither think nor work; but still I must write, write every day in order to win that independence which is denied me. I must endeavour to become free by means of novels; and what novels! Ah, Laura, what a downfall for my ideas of glory!

With fifteen hundred francs of certain income I could work for celebrity; but time is needed for such work, and in the meantime one must live, and I have only this ignoble method of making myself independent. The days melt away in my hand like ice in the sun.

If I do not make money soon the spectre of that old plan will reappear: nevertheless I shall not be a notary, for M. S——has just died; but I believe that M. G—— is quietly looking out for a place for me. What a terrible man! Consider me as dead if they cap me with this extinguisher; I shall become a mill-horse, who does his thirty or forty turns in an hour, with his stated times for stopping, eating, and drinking.

And this is called living, this mechanical rotation, this perpetual return of the same things.

Still, if there were only some one to throw some charm on my cold existence! I do not possess

the flowers of life, though I am in the season when they bloom. What good will fortune and enjoyment be when my youth is passed? Of what good are the clothes of the actor when he has played his part? The old man is one who has dined and watches the others eat; and I am young, my plate is empty and I am hungry. Laura, Laura, my two sole and immense desires are to be famous and to be beloved. Will they be ever satisfied? You ask me for the details of a fête, and to-day I am full of sorrows. Good-bye. A thousand kind things to Surville. Do beg Surville to enquire in what part of Normandy is Château-Gaillard, or the Château Gaillard. Next tell me if there be a library at Bayeux or Caen; if your husband has the privilege of obtaining books from it, and if there are many works on the history of France, especially private memoirs throwing light on the several epochs. The novel I intend to write will be on the subject either of the madness of Charles VI. and the Armagnac or Burgundian factions, or else on that of the conspiracy of Amboise, or the massacre of St. Bartholomew, or the earlier period of French history.

My journey is still dependent on pecuniary considerations of serious import. It is possible

that on January 15, if the press should be enslaved, we may start a paper. If the journals preserve their freedom we shall not. In the next place, if our 'Damné' and our 'Mendiant' were not finished they would have to be finished; if they are put into rehearsal I shall have to stop here. I foresee a good many hitches. If I can make out a couple of months clear I shall rush down and write my novel. If I sell my 'Beau Juif'[1] dear—two thousand francs, for instance—I stick to novels. I shall be free, because six novels a year will bring 12,000 francs. But what chances may interfere!

Shall I send you 'L'Héritière de Birague,' or would you rather ask for it at Bayeux or Caen, if the booksellers there will send for it, and perhaps get us a sale for it in Normandy?

Praise it to the Bayeux ladies, that the booksellers may not lose, and you may describe my novels in simple terms as masterpieces.

I have fallen heir to your pretty room with the Scotch paper, and the little truckle bed, and that little draught from under papa's door; but I have not that pretty little face, like one of Raphael's Madonnas, that used to peep out from the pillow when Mademoiselle Laure was there,

[1] A novel afterwards published under the title of *L'Israélite.*

but in its stead may be seen a yellow, ugly face, which belongs to your most honoured brother.

I have no time to read over what I have written, nor even to write. If you find 'I love you' written thrice, imagine that, as I have written it oftener, it ought to come oftener.

I shall wind up with a domestic picture.[1]

'Louise, give me a glass of water, will you?'

'Yes, madame.'

'Oh! my poor head! I am very ill; I am indeed.'

'Bah, madame!'

'It is worse than it ever was before.'

'Well, madame, you see——'

'My head is splitting.'

These last words, uttered in a dying voice, are suddenly interrupted by a scream. 'Louise, the shutters are banging in a way to shatter every pane of glass!'

I suppose at this moment Surville is holding his hands quite ready that their grasp of mine may be complete. I think of the dear engineer as always as plump as ever, in excellent health, in excellent spirits, singing over his work, eating in haste, drinking, dancing first on one foot, then on the other, indulging in only one idea at a time, and that in the eyes of his wife he is *un amour*,

[1] To give an idea of his mother's nervousness.

except that he has no wings and that he is armed with a pair of compasses. I embrace him with all my heart, and wish him a continuance of the thousandfold prosperity which is sure to come to him sooner or later. HONORÉ,

Public writer and French poet
at two francs a page.

To Madame Surville.

Villeparisis : 1822.

I write to-day on matters of the deepest importance. The question is to find out what people will think of us.

You fancy, perhaps, from this exordium that I am making myself anxious as to what Bayeux, Caen, and all Normandy think of my lovely works ? Well, yes ! but this matter is far weightier.

The subject in debate, *ma chère*, is my mother's journey to visit you, and here are the problems you have to solve in your reply :—

What is Bayeux ? Must we go there with black footmen, horses, carriages, diamonds, laces, cashmeres, an escort of cavalry or infantry—that is to say, are high dresses or low dresses the fashion ? Ought the costume to be *seria* or *buffa ?*

In what key must one sing ? Upon which foot must one dance ? What's the right tone in

which to converse? Who are the right people to visit with? *Tontaine ton ton!*

It is not for me to venture into the depths of such important subjects; discuss them; resolve them: a weighty responsibility will be weighing on your shoulders within a very short time; I cannot disguise the fact from you; I am willing to be your humble servant in all matters save in this alone.

Mamma has so many preparations to make for this journey that she has no time to write, and I am charged with the agreeable task. Thus I am to inform you that Laurentia has lost no time in writing to us that her hopes of maternity are assured. Papa continues well, and cured himself a fortnight ago of an aneurism in the leg. Grandmamma begs me to say all the pretty things she would write if that unfortunate malady did not rob her of all her faculties! Nevertheless she begins to think her head is better, and if the spring comes there is every reason to hope she will recover her wonted gaiety.

I should have a most fertile imagination if I could think of any family events to tell you. Call up one of the days of old; such are our days at present, save that we have lost you and Laurentia and are far from having filled your places.

There is nothing new in Paris but what you already know. I mean General Berton's appeal to arms; the missionaries and the dispersion of the schools; the enthusiasm over the nomination of Liberal Deputies; then Talma, who makes up like Bonaparte in the part of Sylla, and whom everybody is rushing to see.

Pray shake your husband by the hand and let him take the half of all the affectionate messages I send you. Grandmamma embraces you, and so does papa; and mamma is in the seventh heaven at the prospect of this journey. Farewell. I embrace you with all my heart, and beg you will believe that my affection is not diminished an atom by distance or by my silence. There are torrents that make a terrible rush, and yet their beds are quite dry a few days after; but there are waters which flow sluggishly, but flow for ever. Farewell.

To Madame Surville.

Villeparisis : 1822.

To the Casket containing all things delightful; to the Elixir of Virtue, of Grace, and of Beauty; to the Gem, to the Prodigy, of all Normandy; to the Pearl of Bayeux; to the Fairy of St. Laurence; to the Madonna of the Rue Teinture; to the Guardian Angel of Caen; to the Goddess of Enchanting Spells; to the Treasury of all Friendship—to Laura!

My dear Sister,—You know those old comedies wherein Crispin, Lafleur, or Labranche, after practising some abominable trick on that good M. Géronte, throw themselves on their knees, confess their transgressions, and sue for pardon on the auspicious occasion of Mademoiselle Lucile's marriage. Well, then, imagine your poor brother on his knees before you, turning up his eyes like a missionary priest delivering a homily, and supplicating you not to visit him with your displeasure because he has not written to you. He twists and turns his hat, waiting till the corners of Laura's pretty little mouth begin to dimple and then laugh heartily at the attitude of Sir Honoré. Am I forgiven? Yes.

Concerning Villeparisis.

Let me inform you that Mdlle. de B—— has had a narrow escape of breaking herself into three pieces by a fall; that Mdlle. E—— is not such a fool as we all thought—that she has a genius for high art painting, and even for caricature; that she is a musician to the tips of her toes—that M. C—— continues to swear; that Madame de B—— has turned dealer in oats, bran, wheat, and hay, having discovered, after forty years' mature deliberation, that money is everything. M. de B—— sees no better out of his eyes this year than last. Madame Michelin has been confined of a Micheline, whereof M. Michelin is the legal parent.

We possess a colonel, who is looked on as a bottle of the essence of scampishness. He was once an opera dancer, who woke up a colonel in 1793, and has continued the same till this moment. If you will take his word for it, he declined his step to a generalship. The wife of this colonel is an excellent person; we saw her for about five minutes, and in that time she talked a good quarter of an hour. That is how grandmamma came to know that she once kept a grocer's shop, and sold treacle to little boys and gingerbread to old men.

The Balzac Household.

If I unluckily meet old Mother Pelletier[1] and say a word to her, I have to stand for three hours to learn (what do I say ?—learn ?)—to know what I knew before—that she is deaf, that Madame Tomkin is Madame Tomkin, that her son is ill, and that Pelletier is a gay fellow, &c. &c.

Louise[2] has health of which one might say what Madame du Barry said of the coffee of Louis XV.; Louis[3] clatters about, begins fifty things and never finishes one, smokes his pipe, is dirty, but withal a very good servant.

Madame de Balzac has one foot in Paris, the other in the country. Papa is immovable as a rock. Grandmamma thinks he is very happy to have a cold heart and good digestion, and to be able to laugh at everything. Papa says that grandmamma is a clever actress, who knows the value of a walk, of a glance, and how to fall gracefully into an easy chair.

Henry has grown fifteen inches in four months. Honoré does not grow at all, alas! but his reputation grows day by day, as you may judge from the following table :—

[1] The housemaid. [2] The cook. [3] The valet.

	Francs.
'L'Héritière de Birague' sold for . .	800
'Jean Louis' . . „ . .	1,300
'Clotilde de Lusignan' „ . .	2,000

Copies of the first are already offered to the rapacity of the good people of Bayeux and Caen.

The author is blown out like a frog with thinking that Fame may borrow the likeness of Madame Surville and blow her trumpet heartily.

Dear sister, I am going to work like Henry IV.'s horse before it was in bronze, and this year I hope to earn the twenty thousand francs that are to found my fortune. I have to write 'Le Vicaire des Ardennes,' 'Le Savant,'[1] 'Odette de Champdivers' (an historical novel), and 'La Famille R'hoone,' besides a heap of little pieces for the theatre.

In a short time Lord R'hoone[2] will be a man of fashion, the most amiable of authors, and ladies will love him like the apple of their eye. When they see the little Honoré arrive in his carriage, holding his head high, with a proud look, his chest thrown out—at his approach there will be a soft murmur of applause, and they will say, 'It is

[1] Afterwards published under the title of *Le Sorcier*; it now stands as *Le Centenaire.*

[2] 'Lord R'hoone' was one of Balzac's *noms-de-plume.*

the brother of Madame Surville.' Then men, women, and children will leap like hills, and I shall have no end of *bonnes fortunes*. I have renounced dowagers, and will only look at widows under thirty. Send all those who come under your hand to 'Lord R'hoone, Paris.' That will be address sufficient; he is well known at the barriers.

N.B.—They must be rich and amiable. Beauty is not so essential. Varnish soon rubs off, but the essentials remain.

Poor Edward —— has been stopped in the grooves of life. He has begun to send his equipages and jockeys on an embassy to the greatest sovereign in the sublunary world—*Death*.

Cousin V—— is up and about again, and works more tapestry than ever. His wife is always full of gentleness, but hitherto has not been able to induce a servant to remain with her; and Cousin R—— is indefatigable in telling her of some she has heard of through Mesdames Lina, Cardon, Poirié, &c. &c., known or unknown, living with Madame C—— D—— H——.

Cousin Victorine has been three times to dine with us, and each time it was always a fortnight since she had eaten anything whatever. I have been to visit Madame D——. She is always

lovely and attractive. And M. D—— is always ill; he is never well except in Normandy. I found her dressed like an angel, with always the same charming figure, insipid face, and languishing eyes. She reproached me for not having been to see her for so long. We talked of Platonic love and then of other love, and she invited me to her Friday evening receptions. Her *salon* is adorned with two large portraits: on one side is that of M. D—— in an attitude *mensongère*; on the other is that of Madame D——, not in the least like her, playing on the piano. It is a pity that one cannot hear it. This portrait is the *tenth* that I know of. Shall I ever know the original?

How can I have the heart to write all this nonsense to you when we are in so much trouble?

Well, may not one laugh in the extremity of misfortune as one does in the extreme of prosperity? To mock everything, like Democritus, is not that the true philosophy—that which best suits France, which is always laughter-loving? Alas! when I reflect that nothing can avert misfortune, and that it is foolish to weep over a misfortune before it comes—well then I cannot help enlisting under the banner of Roger Bontemps.

Fretting over troubles beats down all energy, gaiety revives and increases it.

Adieu, dear little sister. Give a hearty grip of the hand to Surville. Praise 'L'Héritière de Birague,' and do your best to ensure a great demand for the work in Caen and Bayeux.

To Madame Surville.

Villeparisis : Tuesday Evening, 1822.

Dear, good little Sister,—I love you very much, and you deserve it all; but will you tell me why you only write to me little mouthfuls of letters, which seem to me no more than a strawberry in the throat of a wolf?

You will receive shortly a copy of 'Jean Louis.' I send it to you only on one condition, which is, that you swear by your great gods not to lend it to a living soul, not even to show it, in order that the sale may not be injured. But you may praise it much. I have not sent you 'Birague,' because it is dirty rubbish.

You will find some funny things in 'Jean Louis,' and types of character, but the plot is a detestable plot. The sole merit, my dear, of these two novels is the thousand francs they bring me; but this sum is only to be paid by bills

at long dates. Will they ever be paid? I begin by degrees to feel and to know my own powers. To feel what I am worth, and to sacrifice the first bloom of my ideas to such unutterable stuff, is heart-breaking!

Ah, if I had my loaf I would soon make a place for myself, and I would write some books which perchance might live. My ideas change so much that the work itself will change soon.

Yet a little while and there will be between the myself of to-day and the myself of to-morrow all the difference that there is between the youth of twenty and the man of thirty. I meditate; my thoughts mature; I recognise the fact that Nature treated me well when she bestowed on me the heart and head which I possess.

Have faith in me, my dear sister, for I have need of some one to believe in me. I do not despair of becoming something one of these days. I see now that 'Cromwell' had not the merit of being even an *embryo*. As to my novels, they are not worth the Devil; they are not even good attempts.

You ask me to promise to come to see you at Bayeux instead of going to Touraine. Doubtless I should much prefer it; but it remains to be seen whether I can travel at all, and this seems

very doubtful in the midst of all the things I have undertaken. However, of one thing you may feel sure—that if I make a journey at all it shall be to Bayeux.

You are very fortunate, *vous autres*, to have mamma in a portrait and in the original besides.

I have no news to tell you, neither political nor any other. This last fortnight has passed as if all the days had been one. But, my dear sister, I think that when one has one's mother the letters of a good-for-nothing brother cannot be very interesting; so I hasten to conclude this by assuring you that I always love you very much, though it has been somewhat less since you have possessed our mother.

Farewell. Keep in good health, and think sometimes of us. To-day it is I who am commissioned to convey the kind remembrances of the Villeparisian trio. Farewell, naughty one, you who write to me so sparingly, who keep mamma to yourself and who say nothing—farewell and love. . . .

To Madame Surville.

Villeparisis: August 14, 1822, Morning.

Laura, little Laura,—With the same energy you put forth when writing to Madame Delannoy,[1] 'Smother Montargis!' do I now write, Send me the MS. of the 'Vicaire des Ardennes'!

Mark me. You know in what a state of pecuniary embarrassment I made my arrival in Paris. No sooner alighted than I was laid hold of by Citizen Pollet, who would not loose his hold till I had signed a contract binding me to supply him with two novels between this and October 1. The first is 'Le Savant,' the second 'Le Vicaire.' They are to go to press conjointly, and the fellow has given me two thousand francs—six hundred cash and the rest in bills at eight months, the whole distributed according to the date of delivery of each volume. Only a thousand copies will be printed of the two novels, and I only sell one edition. Taking into count the dates of the bills and the ready money, this is twice as much as I got for 'Clotilde.'

[1] An old friend of the Balzac family, who frequently came to the aid of Honoré, and to whom he dedicated *La Recherche de l'Absolu.*

Accordingly, we have the month of September in which to finish 'Le Vicaire.' I think it will not be possible for us to write each of us two chapters a day, so that I might have 'Le Vicaire' by September; even then I should only have a fortnight in which to recast it. Consider this.

I hope you will see, little Laura, that the infernal need of gold has caused me to sacrifice our project of doing 'Le Vicaire' together. But, on the other hand, I have made an advantageous stroke, inasmuch as you are sure of selling your own novels to Pollet. As soon as I receive the manuscript of 'Le Vicaire' I will send you the plot of a novel clearly set forth, and I think the parent stock of its ramifications will be an idea suggested to me by Laura. If you have any pity for me you will send me that devil of a 'Vicaire;' and if you suspect deceit I will send you the Pollet contract stipulating a forfeit if the 'Vicaire' is not printed by the month of November.

There is the more need of promptitude as Auguste Ricard is doing a 'Vicaire,' and mine must be out six months before his. Luckily these works cost but little labour in the planning; it is but heading the chapters and filling up the pages.

Such a grinding task, Laura, would be an impossibility for you. I do not think you could

do sixty pages of novel-writing in a day. However, if you can—if you can answer for it that you will send the novel by September 15—go on. But, seeing there's that dog of a forfeit if I have not the manuscript ready on September 17, I shall set to work, and you know that for a Pollet one can write a novel in a month.

Now the atrocious deed is done. I began with self-interest—odious, filthy, abominable self-interest. I drop this and leave you to the impulses of your own generosity. I have told all. Now judge, and, although you are an interested party, your decision shall be final. In any case, if you resolve to send the manuscript, despatch it by the diligence, with the address, 'Villeparisis, on the road to Metz,' and let the parcel be securely packed and tightly fastened with string, that this famous 'Vicar' may not be lost on the way.

I shall then send you the plan of a novel about the ruin of a great house by a small enemy.

I was very well received at Villeparisis. Mamma had not read your letter. She was in Paris. I stayed till Monday morning, working away like a negro slave, for 'Le Savant' is in the press, and I am correcting as it proceeds. Every minute is to me as precious as gold.

I have nothing to write about the household.

All goes on as usual; the present resembles the past.

Heaven forgive me! I was nearly forgetting to thank you for your touching hospitality; but I swear to you that my heart is half the day upon that sacred ottoman on which I used to lie at my length in those short pantaloons, without stockings, and without cravat!

Heaven! earth! ocean! oh, sacrilege! oh, abomination! oh, calamity! scourge! pestilence! I have left at your house my knife, the dear knife that never leaves me! Mamma declares I have also left a dinner napkin with a red border, also a pocket-handkerchief. You will make all this right. I have not yet had time to go to the address M. Varin gave me. I have been over head and ears in business. For the next week I shall be trotting all over Paris like a post-horse about my newspaper articles. If Surville goes to Caen let him ask everywhere for 'Clotilde;' the poor abandoned creature sticks on the shelf. My soul is at rest on money matters; but I am grilling in respect of delivering my volumes by fixed dates.

I have read the beginning of 'Wann Chlore.'[1] It pleased them at Villeparisis. Papa is well. He

[1] Now called *Jane la Pâle.*

nearly choked me with laughter just now with his queer sayings.

Grandmamma is enjoying a nervous attack; mamma is very well. Grandmamma insists she ought to have had two shirts sent her to make, and this morning began the one I brought.

Sum total: if you have in you a spark of pity, of high-mindedness, you will send me 'Le Vicaire,' for a penalty of a thousand francs terrifies me.

I am jumping from twig to branch; my head is full, and the possibility of my earning now at once my bread for next year bewilders my brain.

Farewell. I embrace you with all my heart, and will write to you full details in a fortnight, when I shall have recovered from my Parisian fatigues.

To Madame Surville.

Paris: August 20, 1822.

Dear Sister,—You have got me into a great mess. Auguste is doing a 'Vicaire,' as I told you. Mine is sold. Pollet is waiting from day to day for its despatch, as what is done of it must go to press. I shall write it as they go on printing it.

Therefore, by all that is dear to you, and if you have any care for the interests, glory, or self-love of your brother, directly you receive this letter

send off the manuscript by the diligence. Wrap it in two or three sheets of brown paper, cover them with oil-cloth, and address it to 'M. Honoré de Balzac, Villeparisis, on the road to Metz.' Declare the contents to be papers—anything you like.

Three times have I been to the coach office to find out if you had despatched anything. I am on burning coals. Just now I am in Paris, but I go back to-morrow to Villeparisis. I came about the newspapers, &c.

I have seen Laurentia. She is quite well.

I had forgotten M. Varin's letter of introduction, and I have not yet been able to see his brother. But I return in September to give in the end of 'Le Vicaire des Ardennes' and of 'Le Centenaire,' and to touch my money.

I really hardly know what I am writing, for my head is padded with business matters, and from this time to six weeks hence I shall not have a chance of writing a line. I have to give in 'Wann Chlore' by October to Hubert; I must write 'Le Vicaire' as they go on printing it, and correct the proofs of 'Le Savant;' besides which, I have to give lessons to my brother and young de Berny. So you may judge.

Ask M. Varin, if he writes to his brother, to

be kind enough to say I have been too busy to stir out, that three works of mine are being printed at once, and that I cannot call on him for some weeks to come.

Look well after the newspapers. They made me pay two francs each for the missing numbers. You may now feel sure that, however abominably bad your novel may be, I am certain it will be sold. I will send you the plan, and advise you to work at it promptly, for the sooner it is done the better price it will fetch. There is a dearth of novels. I repeat again, Send 'Le Vicaire' by return of post. Auguste has not begun, but he is likely to beat me in speed.

I send you once more a harvest of thanks for your hospitality; and there is something I had forgotten which must be set right, but on September 1 I shall draught the deed.

I have bought a superb Lavater, which I am having bound.

If you want anything apply to me.

I embrace Surville with all my heart, and yourself also as much as I can without mutual injury, and as soon as I have a moment to spare I will write a long letter, closely written, with all the news of the family.

I have seen the diorama; Surville need draw

no more perspectives. Daguerre and Bouton have astonished all Paris. A thousand problems are solved now, that whilst standing before a cloth stretched on a frame, you can believe yourself inside a church, within a hundred yards of all you see. It is one of the marvels of the age, a *conquest by man* for which I was altogether unprepared. That rascal Daguerre has achieved a huzzy of an invention, by which he will pocket a good share of the money of these Parisian rascals. And so *tell* your *tale.*

Farewell. I embrace you.

'Le Vicaire!' 'Le Vicaire!' 'Le Vicaire!' 'Le Vicaire!' by return of post; for I am going to work at it. I shall begin the second volume. Good-bye once more.

Your hand in mine—you and I, and nobody by. Send me 'Le Vicaire!'

To M. Godart, jun., Engraver, Alençon.

Paris: April 19, 1825.

Sir,—I have communicated to M. Urbain Canel the agreement which we signed together last Sunday, and you will find his ratification enclosed. To-day I have shown his ratification, hereunto annexed. I have shown your engravings

this very day to M. Deveria,[1] who was very pleased with them and congratulated us on having found so competent a translator of his designs. He told me it was impossible he could give you any advice with regard to the engravings I showed him, because he is unacquainted with the original design, but he feels certain that if you go on working you will be, by the time you have done two or three of our engravings, the most formidable antagonist of Thompson and the English engravers.

As soon as you return the blocks of Molière[2] which you were to receive from Delongchamps,[3] M. Deveria will lose no time in communicating his remarks, for he will enlist your talent with all the more pleasure that you are a Frenchman.

It is beyond a doubt, therefore, that you will give the benefit of your labours to our editions of La Fontaine, of Racine, and of Corneille, and we shall rejoice to be the first to give you a helping hand.

You may all the more safely begin to work

[1] The connection of Balzac with Deveria, which originated thus, led to a long and firm friendship. *Honorine* was dedicated to Deveria.

[2] This was when Balzac went into his publishing speculation in 1825, which failed through inexperience. To extricate himself from his precarious position he undertook the publication of the Classic French Authors, but abandoned the undertaking after issuing a one volume edition of Molière and de Fontaine.

[3] A Paris publisher.

upon the vignette for Molière as M. Deveria will not be able to let us have any blocks for the La Fontaine before this day week. You have, therefore, some ten days before you for work. But, dating from the 27th of this month, we shall send you plenty of drawings.

You can prepare some score of blocks exactly similar to that which Delongchamps will have sent you, and despatch them to us together with the vignette of the Molière when it is engraved.

I know not how you have got the Delongchamps skein out of its tangle, but I left him in a state of great anxiety after I had informed him of our agreement. You may be assured that M. Urbain and I will never oppose your working for the Molière, since we are interested in it; but we wish to reserve to ourselves the right of giving to one vignette precedence over others; so I hope Delongchamps will not have frightened you.

Accept, sir, the assurance of all the esteem and consideration with which I have the honour to be your very humble and very obedient servant.

P.S.—Pray present my compliments to your father, whom M. Urbain is willing to employ as a correspondent. You will shortly receive books with the drawings. Have perseverance and courage, and you will acquire fame and profit.

To Madame Surville, Versailles.

Paris: 1827.

My dear Laura,—Your letter has occasioned me two detestable days and two detestable nights. I chewed the cud of my defence point by point, like Mirabeau's memoir to his father. I was getting in a blaze over the task, but I give up writing it out. I have not the time, my sister, and, besides, I do not feel myself to blame.

I am reproached with the fitting up of my room; but the furniture in it belonged to me before my catastrophe. I did not buy a single article. Those hangings of blue calico, about which there has been so much fuss, were in my room at the printing office. Latouche and myself nailed them up to cover a hideous paper, which in any case must have been changed. My books are the tools I work with; I cannot sell them. The taste which harmonises everything in my room is not to be bought for money (unfortunately for rich people). Moreover, I set so little store upon these things that if one of my creditors were to have me secretly put into Sainte-Pélagie I should be happier there; I should live for nothing, and I should not be any more a pri-

soner there than I am kept captive here by hard work.

The postage of a letter or the fare of an omnibus are expenses that I dare not allow myself, and I seldom go out for fear of wearing out my clothes. Is this plain speaking or is it not? Do not, then, urge me to journeys, to visits, to undertakings, which are impossible for me; nor forget that I have only time and labour for my capital, and that I have nothing wherewith to provide against the most trifling expenses.

If you would also remember that I am always obliged to be pen in hand, you would not have the heart to exact more correspondence from me. To write when one's brain is weary and one's soul filled with anxieties! I should only afflict you, and to what end? Cannot you understand that before I sit down to work I have sometimes seven or eight business letters to answer?

There is still a fortnight's more work over 'Les Chouans.' Until then you will hear nothing of Honoré; you might as well interrupt the metal founder in the midst of his casting.

Do not think I am in the wrong, dear sister: if you gave me this idea I should lose my head. If my father should fall ill you would let me know, would you not? You know that in such a case no

human consideration would prevent me going to him.

I must earn my living, dear sister, without asking anything from anyone. I must live that I may work, and pay all I owe to everybody. When my 'Chouans' are finished I will bring the book to you; but I do not want to hear a word said about it, either good or bad. Relatives and friends are incapable of judging an author rightly. Thanks, dear champion, whose generous voice defends me. Shall I live long enough to pay the debts of my heart, as well as my other debts?

To Madame Zulma Carraud,[1] *St. Cyr (Seine-et-Oise).*

Paris: Saturday Morning, 1828.

Madam,—It is with regret that I find myself starting on a rather long journey without having been able to call and thank you for your amiable letter and for all the kindness you have shown me. Scarcely even have I time to take leave of you by letter; but I hope, madam, that you will shew in-

[1] Madame Carraud, a native of Touraine, was a friend from childhood of Laura de Balzac, and through this tie she was deeply devoted to Balzac. *La Maison Nucingen* is dedicated to her. Her husband, M. le Commandant Carraud, was in 1830 and 1831 instructor of the military school at St. Cyr. He was subsequently inspector of the powder magazines at Angoulême.

dulgence towards and excuse a poet whose mode of action is thus capricious. I am going away to work. Should you go down to Berry, write me a word to Tours, *poste restante*, and in the month of July or August I shall return by Issoudun. All roads, as you know, lead to Paris.

Be good enough, madam, to recall me to the remembrance of the gentlemen of your family, and make my kind compliments to them.

If I do not return by Issoudun I shall at any rate return by St. Cyr.

Adieu, madam, and be assured that my remembrance of you will not fade amidst all the impressions I go to seek.

Accept my respectful homage.

To the Duchess d'Abrantès,[1] *Versailles.*

Villeparisis : July 22, 1828.

Madam,—The letter which my sister was to send you is the only one I have received from M. Dillon. If he has not written to you, find fault with him, and not with your poor courier. However careless I may seem, I have not yet come to the pitch of strewing the road with papers that you confided to me as most important. In spite

[1] *La Femme abandonnée* is dedicated to her.

of your wish to be angry pray take me once more into your good graces; try never to scold me without good cause, and I will not accuse you of susceptibility.

What idea had you of my discretion when you so sternly ordered me to keep to myself the translation of Casti and Inez? I swear to you I know better than anybody the requirements and modesty of authors, and I am not a man to tear away that veil with which you cover your writings, like those florists who throw a gauze over their wreaths whilst they are being made. Now I want to ask you why you did not tell the story of Inez as it really happened? Why did you put an icy old man between your feelings and the truth? No doubt you know Sterne by heart; do you remember the story of Maria? To my mind the introduction of a third person in this old man destroys the charm, especially in a story professing to be told by one person to the ear of another; it is a case in which the 'I' cannot fail to be graceful. Did we not agree one day that what is natural is what alone ought to be prized? and has not La Fontaine sketched the duties of travellers in those lines where one pigeon says to the other—

J'étais là; telle chose m'avint;
Vous y croirez être vous-même?

As to turning things into ridicule, I admire the good faith with which people talk and write; what an ebb and flow of contrary opinions are continually balancing each other.

You have done me the honour to believe that I have some distinction of intellect, that I am one of those people who, without being marked out for high destinies, nevertheless know how to raise themselves above meaner things, and that I am not one of those fools who, when the rain or the fine weather, the heat, jockeys, actresses, the fashions, and gossip are taken away, are like besieged persons whose provisions are cut off. Thank you humbly for this opinion; I shall not tell you whether I am flattered, nor whether it is true; I will only remind you that you wrote it—that you are frank, and therefore you must have thought it. Can you, then, believe that a mind whose ideas have some breadth, which gathers great affinities, which sees things *en masse*, is likely to descend to ridicule? Ridicule is the coldest of all things in the world; it always betrays some dryness of heart, and that which is great is rarely without what is good also. Besides, I will ask you what it is that I should ridicule?

Rousseau would have said roughly, 'Why do you fancy you will be laughed at?' The history

of Inez is good, but only as an accessory to a longer story; as a tale by itself it would lose all force; it is a flower which is seen to advantage only in the midst of a bouquet.

I ask you once more, who can have told you that I was held in flowery chains? to what fairy do I owe your recommendation to go without a *bourrelet*,[1] leading strings, or nurse? I can assure you, madam, I have a quality for which I do not gain credit even from those who think they know me best, and that is energy.

You must, from your own experience, have discovered how misfortunes develope in us that terrible power of stiffening oneself to breast the storm and of preserving a calm and steady aspect in adversity. Pardon me if I speak in the first person, but you force me to do so, in spite of my reluctance. I have acquired the habit of smiling at misfortune.

There is only one occasion when I give way to sarcasm, and that is when Fortune torments me, which she has never yet ceased to do. I am old in suffering, though you would not suspect it from my cheerful looks.

I cannot even say that I have had reverses, for

[1] A cane or whalebone wicker cap, to protect children's heads from the furniture when learning to walk.

I have been always bowed down under one terrible weight of care. This may sound like exaggeration—an attempt to attract your interest —but it is not so. Nothing I could say would give you any idea of my life up to the age of two-and-twenty. I am surprised that I have no enemy to struggle against except Fortune.

You may question those about me as much as you please, but you will obtain no light upon the nature of my unhappiness. There are people who die, and physicians cannot tell the malady which has killed them.

I have said all this only that you may be aware of the hard constraint under which I have had to live. The result has been to endow me with a savage energy, and a hatred of which you can form no idea for whatever seems like a yoke.

Your habit of command makes a refusal seem to you like a great misfortune. Well, I am not talking of refusals. There is nothing so philosophical in the world as a refusal or contempt that is not deserved.

I am speaking of domination. To live under a domination is to me insupportable ; I have refused everything in the shape of place because of the subordination it entails. Upon this point I am a real savage. And it is *me* whom you imagine

being *led*, or of whom people have told you that *I am led!* Nothing could well be more false.

Once more, madam, as I do not wish to speak longer about myself—for it is very irksome to me, and it is also very absurd—I will only say that you will not be able to come to any conclusion about me or against me from myself, except that I have the most singular character of anyone I know. I make a study of myself as I would study another. I contain within my five feet four inches all possible inconsistencies, all possible contradictions.

Those who believe me to be vain, spendthrift, obstinate, careless, without continuance of ideas, a coxcomb, negligent, idle, without application, without reflection, without steadiness, a gossip, with no tact, ill-bred, uncivil, whimsical, uncertain in temper, would be just as accurate in their estimate as those who might say that I am economical, modest, courageous, tenacious, energetic, easy in manner, industrious, constant, silent, full of tact, civil, always cheerful. He who says I am a coward is no more in the wrong than he who says I am exceedingly courageous. In short, wise or ignorant, full of talents or a fool, I am no longer astonished at myself. I end by believing that I am an instrument to be played upon by circumstances.

Is this kaleidoscope given, then, by chance to the minds of those who attempt to paint the human heart and all its affections, so that they may by the strength of their own imagination feel what they describe? And is not observation a kind of memory which comes to the aid of this quick imagination? I begin to think so. However, allow me to assure you that no one in this world more abhors a yoke—the very yoke you mean in your letter—than I do. This is enough about myself. I hope, after this confession, you will never make me speak of myself again. But about yourself? How is it that you are ill—you, who wear all the livery of health? Plato calls the body that 'other.' Then I say I am sorry for the sufferings of your '*other*'; but as regards your mind it must always be the same.

I expect to go soon to Paris; but, in spite of my inclination, it will be next to impossible for me to go to Versailles. I have a world of things to do. Are there not three of my teeth which must come out! You see we are both in the hands of doctors. I know you will be vexed with me, and Versailles is only five leagues from Paris; but I can assure you of one thing—that it lies on the road from Paris to Tours.

The rapidity with which I have written has

obliged me to read over these three pages, and I have laughed to see the facility with which we furnish arms against ourselves. You will laugh at me and at my horror of all that is like subjection and commands. At least promise me that you will only laugh between ourselves; and if you can show me that I am wrong, no one is more disposed than myself to quit the path of error. Adieu, madam. I hope you will be without anxiety about your health when you receive this letter, and I beg of you to accept my sincere and respectful friendship.

To Madame Zulma Carraud.

Paris: January 1829.

Madam,—I hope you will not be failing in charity towards an unfortunate wretch who is working night and day, even to the extremity of death. If you come to Paris, you will not forget me—will you? Just imagine: I have twenty times taken my hat and gloves to go to St. Cyr, and as many times I have been stopped by business. But, even at the risk of losing a chance of getting money, I will come one of these days to you—I hope to breathe in quiet near you, far away from work and trouble.

I have heard that you have had a great sorrow,

and I sympathise with you in it. M. Boyet[1] tells me that you have been ill; therefore I excuse you for leaving me without a letter and in ignorance of your suffering.

If you should be coming to Paris, tell me the day, in order that I may get my liberty for that day. Then if the proofs, if the MS. which must be ready, have left me alive, I will come from the 3rd to the 6th to St. Cyr to pay my late New Year's Day visit.

Recall me to the kind remembrance of the gentlemen, and accept this expression of a warm friendship and an unchanging gratitude.

To Madame Surville, Champrosay, near Corbeil (Seine-et-Oise).

Château de Saché: 1829.

What is this that you say, my dear sister—that I neglect you, that I do not write to you, when there are no less than two letters which I have written to you for one little bit of a scrawl you have written to me! It is not, however, I who keep count of letters!

I should have a great deal to say to you. Only

[1] Auguste Boyet, *genre* painter, author of *La Chine ouverte* and of *La Chine et les Chinois*, one of the first artists to initiate us into the mysteries of the Celestial Empire. Auguste Boyet at this time lived in the Rue Cassini, near the Observatory, and in the same rooms with Balzac.

figure to yourself that M. de Margonne [1] is leaving to-morrow; and in the wish to send you a little letter without cost of postage I have quitted my work, and I have not more than one quarter of an hour in which to write to papa, mamma, and to you. But patience! As soon as my novel shall give me a little respite, I promise, and you may depend upon it, that you shall have a long, impertinent letter, which shall have no end, and one also to your husband, to whom I owe an answer, and I promise you shall be content. In your little letter you seem rather low-spirited. Is it that Sophie is not well, or is it that she will no longer say 'ga,' or has she deteriorated from the *gentilesse* which you foresaw for her *in futurum?* I might also say that you tell me nothing. If you knew how busy I am—*plus que le légat*, as mamma says. I have visited all St. Lazare,[2] and have seen many things that needs doing.

P.S.—I am at Tours to-day, and am going to-night to Madame d'Outremont's Ball—*ousque.* I intend to dance with Eliza B—— and Clara D——, who is so small that one could only marry her to make her into a breast-pin. Adieu, dear sister. A thousand kind regards to your husband. The rest shall come in the next number—I swear it to you.

[1] His host at Saché, to whom *La Messe d'Athée* is dedicated.
[2] A farm which Madame de Balzac possessed near Tours.

To Madame Surville, Champrosay, near Corbeil (Seine-et-Oise.)

Château de Saché: 1829.

Ah, Laura, if you only knew how I dote (but hush!) on two blue screens embroidered with black (hush again!) This is a subject to which, amidst all my cares, my thoughts still revert. Then I said, 'I will confide this longing to my sister Laura. When I possess these screens I never can do anything bad. Shall I not always have before my eyes a remembrance of that so indulgent sister—so indulgent to her own fancies, so severe to mine?' Just now before my fire I performed that contractile gesture of the arms and hands peculiar to you (and not unlike a flapping of wings) when you are pleased with yourself, or with a *bon-mot* or anything you like. Then I thought of you, and I said, 'I must write to her and tell her I love her, and Surville also,' and here it is. A quarter of an hour of my time and a kindly thought are well worth four sous; so off with you, Flora, to the box of M. the postmaster. A grasp of the hand to the Canal.[1] Tell Madame de F—— that my regard for her is only just within the bounds of propriety. As this sweet

[1] M. Surville was busy with a project for a canal that Charles X. wished to have made on the chance of a war with England.

flattery is to be conveyed by post, it ought to increase in weight and in quickness as the square of the distance increases; consequently this speech may crush her if you repeat it all at once. Sister, adieu.

The designs for the screens may be whatever you please; they might be *je ne sais quoi*, and I should always find them lovely, as they would come from my *alma soror*.

I reopen my letter, dear sister. You will see by the dates that I was writing to you when your letter came. I suffer bitterly in being the object of perpetual suspicions. I think my letter will answer everything. I am unhappy enough. The tranquillity of the cloister and peace are necessary for me to be able to earn money. When I become fortunate, I shall perhaps have justice done me. It will then be too late, for I shall not be happy till I am dead. Does anyone imagine that to revise forty slips and forty proofs, to rewrite a manuscript, is child's play? Do you imagine that to get four volumes ready for the press between January 15 and February 15 (which is a volume a week—and there is one whole one to be written) can be done by the stroke of a fairy's wand?

Oh, Laura, Laura, the tears come into my eyes! We pass life in giving each other needless pain;

when people do not understand each other better, distance is a blessing, and coming nearer to each other causes bitter pain.

I return to the screens. Give me my screens; I need more than ever some little pleasure in the midst of so many vexations.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, St. Cyr.

Paris: April 17, 1829.

Madam,—Have you sometimes said, 'M. Honoré is very tardy in sending me that oblong engraving he promised for my glove-box. And my screen! And my match-holder! He promises much and performs little,' &c. &c?

I dare not flatter myself with the reality of these reproaches; but, in case you should have thought of me, I throw myself on your indulgence to forgive my apparent negligence. If you wish to dwell in a person's thought continually, employ on your commissions those you love; for I tell you there is nothing so eloquent and so tyrannical in the world as the remembrance of something you have to do and have not yet done.

This morning I was by my fireside, busy sealing letters, and every time I took up a fresh match the two dogs you placed beside my pretty little piece of furniture barked at me. That was

for the hundredth time. No, M. Honoré is not forgetful, but for this month past he has been obliged to finish a work in a hurry to which he does not affix his name; for artists paint pictures for a livelihood which they do not sign, and pictures to make a name which they send to the exhibition. That is my case.

You shall have a screen! I contracted that debt with too much pleasure not to feel it a pleasure to discharge it. Moreover, if you take your match-holder and your screen down to Frapesle,[1] among all the pretty things you have taken there, it will be a bait to my friendship which I shall not be able to resist. To be held in remembrance by a lovely soul is one of my most cherished illusions. I am in a lawsuit to obtain copies of my book, and so long as the case is undecided I am deprived of the pleasure of sending you one, for I do not blush to own I am not rich enough to buy it.

Recall to M. Carraud's remembrance an author who is daily becoming more careworn and misanthropical, but who remembers that sometimes he has forgotten his troubles at St. Cyr.

Present my kind compliments to M. Périollas,[2]

[1] A country place of M. Carraud, near Issoudun.

[2] One of the officials at St. Cyr. *Pierre Grassou* is dedicated to him.

and accept for yourself, madam, all that can be offered that is sweetest and most sincere in the shape of a compliment.

To the Duchesse d'Abrantès, Versailles.

Paris: 1829.

Madam,—It would be very unpleasant for me to appear before you conscious of any transgression. I might excuse my vehemence and too great sensibility by alleging, like the orators of the Chamber of Deputies, the heat of an extemporaneous effusion, for my answer was written in haste and with an innkeeper's pen; so impatient was I to undeceive you.

Without wishing, like the commentators, to find other than is written in the text, I might easily reply that because strength extinguishes sensibility it is not to be inferred that sensibility has no existence, and yet you have answered me as though I had said, 'You have no sensibility,' which is the grossest insult that can be addressed to a woman; for is it not to strip her with a word of all that constitutes a woman, since you only exist, live, please, and attract by your sensibility?

Let me make a comparison which will put my thought in a clear and inoffensive light.

Voltaire had a prodigious amount of wit, he had also genius; but in the total mass of his mental constitution the proportion of wit was greater than of genius: whereas, on the other hand, there was scarcely any wit about Rousseau and a large amount of genius.

Now, reasoning on the general argument, let me tell you that we do not make our own characters; we submit to them from birth, obeying the whimsical conformation of our organs (hence it has always seemed to me absurd to tax a man of genius with pride, or to cry up his modesty). But I do not see that one can repudiate as an outrage a character so unusual in a woman: it has its advantages, its brilliant sparkle, its attractions, equally with that which shines only by an exquisite sensibility. Women, as to character, are divided into two great classes, the Isidoras[1] (allow me to quote this touching emblem of grace and submissiveness) and the Staëls, whose masculine ideas and bold conceptions, whose strength in short is strangely united with all the weaknesses of your sex. Clarissa, Richardson's heroine, is a young girl in whom natural sensibility is continu-

[1] The heroine of a romance by the Duchesse d'Abrantès, as are likewise Belvidera and Bianca Capello, whose names recur frequently in these letters.

ally extinguished by a power which Richardson has called virtue. In fact, there are here, to my mind, two sensibilities, as there are two kinds of grief: the sensibility of that Spanish woman whose lover having a duel on his hands became his second; arriving first on the ground, and being asked by the other combatant why she was there, replied, 'To bury you.' And there is the sensibility of Bianca Capello, who abandons honours, riches, her native land, her father, her religion, all to follow her lover, and, like a second Isidora, prepares with her hands the repasts of her beloved.

Do you not think both pictures here presented equally fine? To one temper of mind that of the Spanish woman will be more attractive, to another Bianca will seem superior. Out of the reflections suggested by the whimsicalities that are born of sensibility developed in so many ways I have formed this axiom for myself: 'Woman is never so touching or so beautiful as when she renounces all empire, and humbles herself before her master.' This is telling you that Bianca Capello, Isidora, and Mademoiselle are my heroines.

Do not run away with the idea that I speak from fatuity and that sort of feeling, whatever it be, which you continually attribute to men; I am

speaking now as an artist—say, a sculptor, who should maintain that the naked figure is more beautiful than drapery; for between ourselves I confess that Bianca Capello, Belvidera, and all such women who prostrate themselves in an attitude of perpetual obedience, and watch for a smile, a glance, a nascent wish, as flowers await the dew, are the women who exercise over us the most absolute and complete dominion that ever possessed the heart with all the power of one sole imperishable sentiment.

The other character has this incontestable attraction, that it is a continual incense to man's vanity. What a satisfaction for a man to reign over a heart that has never bowed to another! to see a proud and terrible creature, who tramples under her feet the entire earth, commands all that draws the breath of life, and to reign over her! He is a king seated on his throne; he enjoys, in fact, the rapture of Jupiter's mistresses, who sported with the brows at whose frown the globe trembled; and Henry III. hardly deserved the love of that heroine, that fierce and haughty one, who beat down beneath her horse's feet the nobles who had dared to insult her with their sarcasms.

After these explanations, I think, madam, that

you will acknowledge my innocence. Permit me to believe also that the terrible trials of your life have been meted out to you in proportion to your strength of character; that this strength is the source of many high and noble thoughts on the ever-shifting spectacle in the midst of which you have been placed; that at this moment the close seclusion into which you have withdrawn yourself is but as the night awaiting the dawn of another day. For, indeed, the more I have thought upon your destiny and the character of your mind, the more I am convinced that you are one of those women privileged to prolong their reign beyond the limits of ordinary nature; that you have had it in your power to do that for a brilliant epoch which Madame Roland only attempted to do for a period of sorrow and of glory. I know not if ever you have felt any of those impetuous impulses that spring from the heart and overmaster one at the spectacle of the manifold scenes, heroic figures, and lofty characters of life, but I wish to believe it, for yours seems to me a nature stamped with an especial seal. Could it be chance alone that launched you on your career through all the countries of our time-worn Europe, thrown into commotion by a Titan surrounded with demi-gods?

This, madam, was my thought concerning yourself, but which I had not the leisure to express while I was at Tours; and let me add, that I have given expression to my feelings, and they are sincere. I may be mistaken, but as regards your merits I can deduct nothing, add nothing. There is in my nature a headlong frankness, which is very like that of Mdlle. Josephine; I am too indifferent to be circumspect, too impulsive to lie. The friendship you deign to offer me, madam, is a chimera I still pursue, in the teeth of the frequent disappointments I have encountered. From my boyhood at school I have sought not for friends, but a friend. I am of La Fontaine's opinion, and I have never yet found what a romantic and exacting imagination pictures to me in such fascinating colours. The phenomenon of friendship has always been explained in my eyes by a physical analogy; two beings must have sufficient time to attach themselves to each other by accidental conditions of the soul, like those insects which in spinning their webs will not fix a thread until they have made a separate journey to explore the ground for each thread, and even then return several times to the spot; but there are also, I am fain to believe, certain souls who feel and appreciate each other

at once. Your proposal, madam, is so delightful, so flattering, that I am not likely to withhold my hand.

To M. Alphonse Levavasseur, Publisher, Paris.

Paris : November 1829.

My poor, unhappy Publisher,—The loveliest girl in the world can give but what she has. I work all day long at 'La Physiologie du Mariage;' I only give six hours of the night (from nine till two) to the 'Scènes de la Vie privée,' of which I have to correct the proofs; and my conscience is clear.

I am quite ready to send the copy required to finish up by the 15th, if you wish; but it would be the most atrocious murder that we—you, Canel, and myself—ever yet committed on a book.

There is a something in me—I don't know what it is—which prevents me from doing wrong consciously. The question is whether to bring out a book which shall live—to make waste paper of it, or a work for the library shelf—whether this blotted paper shall be sold for seven francs per ream or for fifty.

If I were an idler, drew up advertisements, mended old shoes, played billiards, ate and drank, &c., well and good; but I have never a thought,

never stir a step, which is not for the 'Physiologie.' I dream of it; I do nothing else; I am stricken with it. I can understand your commercial impatience, for mine is tenfold.

The copy lies on my desk, but I am brought to a halt continually by some story to be told, by some new idea to be worked out, by—by—in fact, I might run on till to-morrow telling you how the author of this work is for ever hovering at each line between success and the gallows. I have never yet so thoroughly realised how important a work this is. I was thinking of a book to amuse people, when one morning you walk in and ask me to do in three months what it took Brillat-Savarin ten years to accomplish. He had to deal only with *godailleries*, whereas I have to deal with the most important question in France. He had a new subject; mine is the most hackneyed.

There is one miracle of which I will boast: it is that the first volume of 'La Physiologie'[1] has been entirely re-cast into its present shape between September 1 and November 10, 1829; for on the 10th the *Ite, missa est,* will be pronounced.

Don't imagine that this letter is a mere excuse. I am working with ardour and as continuously as

[1] *La Physiologie du Mariage.*

any living soul can work; but I am only the humble servant of the muse, and the hussy has her fits of ill temper.

You need not despair, for on the 15th I will let you know frankly what you may reckon upon. Not till then shall I have probed the wound to its full depth—that is, reached the second volume.

Tout à vous.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, St. Cyr.

Paris: 1830.

The feeling of repulsion which you experienced, madam, on reading the first pages of the book I brought you does you too much honour, and betokens too nice a sense of delicacy, for even an author to take offence. It proves that you do not belong to a world of falseness and perfidy; that you are ignorant of that portion of society which blights everything; and that you are worthy to live in that solitude wherein human nature becomes always so great, so noble, and so pure.

It is, perhaps, unfortunate for the author that you should not have resisted the first impulse which seizes on every innocent being on hearing about crimes—at seeing misfortune described—on reading Juvenal, Rabelais, Persius, Boileau—for I think that later on you would have been

appeased; you would have found certain stern lessons, certain vigorous pleadings in defence of virtue and of *woman*. But how can I complain of a repugnance which is to your honour—how quarrel with you for remaining true to your sex? I therefore humbly beg your pardon for this involuntary outrage on your feelings, for which, if you remember, I had prepared myself, as you may recollect; and I entreat you to believe that however severe the judgment you have pronounced on this work will in no way lessen or alter the sincerity of the friendship which you permit me to entertain for you; and I hope you will deign to accept the renewed assurance of my regard, for I assure you that the frank expression of the feeling of a friend upon an action which seems to be wrong can only serve to draw closer the bonds of confidence and esteem.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, St. Cyr.

Paris: April 14, 1830.

Madam,—You have indeed been severe. I know nothing of what happens at St. Cyr, whether lucky or unlucky, so that I have only been able to sympathise with you in the vaguest way, and as a man may who works night and day to sustain his miserable existence. Ink, pens, paper, are a

horror to me, and everything like an idea gives me a shudder. In fact, it was rather your turn to write to me.

Whatever happens, I will come and see you this week, in order to bring you the 'SCÈNES DE LA VIE PRIVÉE,' which was published yesterday. I have to thank you for subscribing to the 'Feuilleton.'[1] I intended every day to come and see you; but you know what Paris is—a heap of sand, like those that roll on the shores of the Loire. Once step into them, and you cannot escape. Yesterday it was a matter of business that detained me; to-morrow it will a delightful soirée, when Malibran is to sing; this morning, a bachelor breakfast; in the evening, it will be some pressing work. Thus the gulf devours a lifetime which, if it were passed in solitude, might be full or glorious.

However, do not think I am so very dissipated; I have worked horribly, and my debauches take the shape of volumes. In June I hope to offer you 'Les Trois Cardianux,'[2] a work which possibly will not be unworthy of attention.

If I have time, I will come early; and if I listened to my inclinations, I should stay at that St. Cyr which you find so dull.

[1] *Le Feuilleton des Journaux politiques.*

[2] Balzac never wrote this work. It was intended to bring in *le père Joseph*, called *l'Eminence grise*, Mazarin, and Dubois.

Accept, madam, the homage of a sincere and respectful friendship.

A thousand compliments to M. Carraud and Captain Périollas.

To Madame Surville, Champrosay.

Paris : 1830.

I have heard that my dear sister has written there might be no such person as Honoré, for all Champrosay knows of him.

Your scoldings, madam, are now before my eyes. I see plainly you require further information respecting this poor delinquent.

Honoré, dear sister, is a wild fellow over head and ears in debt, without having had a single pleasure (*bamboche*) for the money, and who feels sometimes as if he could knock his head against the wall, though some persons will not allow that he has any head at all.

He is at this moment a prisoner to his room, with a duel on his shoulders : he is bound to slay a half-ream of paper, and to transpierce it with ink that shall be tolerable enough to bring joy and good cheer to his purse.

This wild fellow has some good in him. He is called cold and indifferent. Do not believe a word

of it, beloved sister. His heart is in the right place, and he would be ready still to do anyone a good turn, but having no credit with *Master Shoe-sole* (*Messer Chaussepied*) he is no longer in a plight to run about, as of yore, to oblige anyone. This is scored up against him as a scandal.

In the matter of affection he is rich, and certain to return twofold all he receives; but his nature is such, that a harsh or offensive word wipes all the joy out of his soul, so susceptible is he to all that is refined in sentiment. He needs friends with hearts which can take life in a grand way, who know what true affection is, and who do not think it consists in visits, compliments, and other foolishness of the like kind. He carries oddity so far as to receive a friend whom he has not seen for years as though he had called but yesterday.

This same wild fellow may forget the harm that is done him, the good never; he would write it on brass, were there any in his heart.

As to what strangers may think or say of him, he heeds it as the sand that adheres to his feet. He strives to become something, and when one is building up a monument one cares little what insolent people may scribble on the hoarding.

This young man, such as I describe to you,

loves you, dear sister, and these words will be understood by her to whom they are addressed.

To M. Théodore Dablin, Paris.

Paris : 1830.

My dear Dablin,—My sister tells me that you still bear a remembrance of some sharp expressions which escaped me in the last visit I made to you, when I called to beg you to take a guarantee, which I thought necessary in case any accident should carry me off. If anyone could stand an outbreak of purely artistic anger it is certainly an old friend who knew me before 1817, and who came to see me in the Rue Lesdiguières when I was suffering my first martyrdom ; but as I never hurt anyone in my life, not even an enemy, I deeply regret my warmth in this literary discussion, since you have remembered my rough words so long.

This sort of irritation proceeds neither from my soul nor from my heart ; it is occasioned by the state of nervous excitement into which coffee throws me when its effects, instead of expending themselves on paper, exhaust themselves in air—that is to say, when, instead of writing, I go out of doors. An old friend of mine, a lady, detected this effect of coffee upon me ten years ago ; and

though I can sometimes control it, there are times when, through worry, I am unable to do so. You will have thought my friendship doubly onerous, whilst all the time I am feeling sorry enough that you should be so unequally yoked, for up to the present moment it is I who have reaped all the advantage.

You know little of me, my dear Dablin, and if you love me you show thereby that a man may love a friend as one does a woman, without knowing her; but there would be no misunderstanding between us were you to try to know me better. A man who for the last fifteen years has risen every day in the middle of the night, who has never found his days long enough, who is for ever struggling against hindrances, can no more go and look after his friend than he can go after his mistress. For that reason, I have lost many mistresses and many friends; but without regret, for they could not understand my position.

This is why you have never seen anything of me, except when business brought me. I am sorry that you did not answer my question as to the Insurance, for the longer I live the more my work accumulates, and I cannot be sure that I shall hold up under unremitting toil. At this moment two months' travelling in Belgium or

elsewhere would refresh my hot, over-taxed brain, and give me back the strength to set to work afresh; and I have neither the time nor the money for it. It is now five years since I took a journey, and to travel is the only relaxation I care about. I foresee that my destiny will be unfortunate: it will be that I shall die on the very eve of the day when all my desires would be realised.

This is why I am anxious that you, my mother, and Madame Delannoy should be protected from loss, for you three stand first in my intentions. M. Gavault[1] is another, by reason of the services he renders me, with a devotedness which makes my heart his debtor, as it is with you and Madame Delannoy. I certainly have the hope of free and happy days, which death only can frustrate. This is why my exhaustion, combined with the necessity for work, frightens me. I should be more tranquil if my true friends were guaranteed against an event which would be sad to them alone.

To M. Victor Ratier, Editor of 'La Silhouette,' Paris.

La Grenadière: July 21, 1830.

First of all, let me tell you that on seeing your letter I fancied I caught sight of you in the act of

[1] M. P. S. Gavault, *avocat*, at Paris. *Les Paysans* is dedicated to him.

opening my study door, so completely did you take the form of remorse.

Oh! if you only knew what sort of a country is this Touraine! It makes you forget everything. I quite pardon the inhabitants for being stupid; they are so happy. Now, of course, you know that people who are very happy are always dull. I have come to look at glory, the Chamber of Deputies, politics, the future of literature, as though they were so many poisoned balls for the extinction of wandering and homeless dogs, and I say to myself, 'Virtue, happiness, life, mean an income of six hundred francs a year on the banks of the Loire.'

Do come down here for three days. Travel by Caillard's diligence, on the *impériale*; it will cost you thirty francs there and back (ten francs a day). And you will have given your approval to my editorial labours in twenty-four hours, if you set your foot in my house—La Grenadière, near Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire, a house situated half-way up a hill, close to a delightful stream, covered with flowers—honeysuckles—and whence I gaze upon landscapes a thousand times more beautiful than any those rascals of travellers stupefy their readers by describing. Touraine has on me the effect of a *pâté de foie gras* in which one is up to the chin, and its delicious wine, instead of making you tipsy,

makes you stupid and happy. Accordingly, I have hired a cottage here until November, for when I shut my shutters I can work, and I do not intend to behold that luxurious Paris again till I have laid in a good stock of literary work.

Fancy, moreover, that I have made the most poetical journey that can possibly be made in France, which is to go from hence to the other end of Brittany, down to the sea, by water—not dear, three or four sous a league—passing along the most smiling shores in the world; I felt my thoughts grow wider with the stream, which approaching the sea becomes immense. Oh! to live like a Mohican!—to run over the rocks! swim in the sea! to breathe full draughts of air and sunshine! Oh, how I could feel with the savage! Oh, how thoroughly I realised the corsair's, the adventurer's, lives of opposition. As I stood there I said to myself, 'Life is courage and plenty of good rifles, the art of steering over the wide seas and a hatred of men (Englishmen, for instance).' Oh, for thirty lusty fellows all of the same mind, and to trample down prejudices like M. Kernock!

Back again here, without money, the ex-corsair has become a dealer in ideas and turned his mind to fishing up his gudgeons for sale. Imagine now a man —this vagabondiser (*vagabondant*)—who beginning

with an article entitled 'Traité de la Vie élégante,' ends by writing a volume in octavo, which 'La Mode' is going to print and some bookseller to republish. This comic and killing undertaking has held me in a vice ever since I wrote to M. Varaigne.[1] My companion, who is going away for twelve days or a fortnight, will take this letter to Paris, and about a third of the volume, and you will tell me, with your rare and precious frankness, whether the book is worthy of me. As to 'La Vie de Château,' Emile has committed a positive murder by inserting it. It was the rough sketch of an article thrown off on the edge of the table, and I had here an article on the same subject, conscientiously written, when I saw the treacherous trick of 'La Mode!' If you could find me a subject as suggestive as 'La Vie élégante' for 'La Silhouette,' and allow me time enough to let it settle and clear in my mind, you should see—oh! oh! oh!

Your 'Silhouette' does well with the 'Caricatures for the Week.' The idea is a happy one. But you are ruining the undertaking by giving bad caricatures. It is a good notion to make up the number with an explanation of the lithographs

[1] Victor Varaigne, joint editor of the *Feuilleton des Journaux politiques.*

and the article 'Caricatures of the Week.' You ought have an article done by some witty man on the events of the day, like that in 'Le Journal Rose,' but taking up different facts, and with it a special article on the fine arts—a criticism of some picture, book, engraving, &c. This would give you an excellent form of making up, and you ought never to depart from it (a friendly piece of advice). You know that a good counsel is as good as an eye in your hand, and costs nothing. A good counsel is an idea, and an idea is a fortune. Come and spend three or four days here. We shall be as free as a couple of Iroquois Indians living in the same wigwam and sharing the same game. I have a slave here like my Flora in Paris. By the way, your 'Esclaves du Sérail' are mighty stupid. Tell the man who comments on the caricature that to write funny things to make one laugh they must rest on a foundation of truth.

. . . . . .

And my philosopher has just written his sharp epigrams for a journal! *Proh pudor!* It seems to me that the ocean, a brig and an English ship to demolish, though one should go the bottom for it, is something worthier than a writing desk, a pen, and the Rue Saint-Denis.

Farewell, dear Ratier; and since we have, or believe we have, both of us hearts that beat warmly, let us give each other a grip of the hand.

My respects to Madame Ratier.

Ah, how I regret not having some comrade with me who could develope all the ideas that crowd my brain too thickly for me to be able to work them out!

To M. Charles Rabou, Editor of 'La Revue de Paris.'

Nemours: Wednesday, May 18, 1831.

My dear Master,—You really are too bad for anything. I asked you quite humbly to tell me whether 'L'Auberge Rouge' will appear *à la Trinité.* You have not answered a word to your humble servant.

I am at this moment on horseback upon a crime; I eat, I sleep, in 'L'Auberge Rouge;' so that I may be able on Monday morning, when I dismount, to give the first paragraph to our friend Foucault—a pretty little MS. written in the country, a copy without erasures, trimmed and re-trimmed, and coquettishly corrected. Ah! ah! I would not disappoint my friend Gosselin, and give a stab with a penknife to his 'Peau de Chagrin'—not for his Majesty Frederick William.

Have the great goodness to write one little line to 'M. Balzac, at Nemours, Seine-et-Marne, *bureau restant*,' just to tell me whether it is 'yes' or 'no.'

I know well, wretch of an editor, that you will say 'yes' at all hazards, and be sure to put me off from Sunday to Sunday like a fête which the Pope is puzzled where to place in the calendar.

But I beseech you (*te imprecor*), by the manes of, I know not whom, not to play on my romance-writing credulity, but to tell me true—if ever the manager of marionettes could tell the truth.

If you were a friend.

If you were a true friend you would be so good-natured as to make a little research I require for 'L'Auberge Rouge'—namely, to find out in what month, what year, and under what Republican general the French penetrated, at the commencement of the Revolution, into Germany to Düsseldorf or farther, and what corps it was.

I am here without one poor book, alone in a garden-house at the farthest end of the grounds, dwelling with my 'Peau de Chagrin,' which, thank God, is coming to a finish. I work night and day, taking nothing but coffee. And so I find it a needful relief from my regular work to work at 'L'Auberge Rouge.'

To Madame Zulma Carraud, St. Cyr.

Good heavens! madam, I have done you wrong, for I confess I have not yet found a moment's leisure to read the manuscript of our dear Lieutenant Duparc, which you sent me, and I know as well as you do how necessary it is that it should be well published.[1]

The manuscript in question lies on my table, enforcing with mute eloquence the reproaches of my own conscience.

Meanwhile the book trade is not as yet sufficiently tranquillised to afford a good opportunity of getting this translation published. I am not so very guilty, then, after all. Some time must yet elapse before I can busy myself about it actively, effectually, and usefully.

My days and nights have been taken up by extra work, and I tell you everything when I confess that I have not written a line of 'La Peau de Chagrin' since I wrote those few pages at St. Cyr.

The political labours imposed on me by my duties as a candidate standing for two *arrondissements*[2] absorb all my attention. I have to carry on

[1] This refers to a German translation by a poor officer in the army who had served with M. Carraud.

[2] At the elections to fill vacant seats in the Chamber in 1831

at once my literary occupations, which, as you know, are my livelihood, and my political studies, so that sometimes I break down. Besides all this, I am now forced to make some sacrifices to society, and I go out into the world much oftener than I desire. But as for you, you have not written me one wretched line, not a word to console and sustain me, in the overwhelming struggle which threatens to swallow me alive. Though I may not write to them, I do not think of my friends the less.

By this time you ought to have received three copies of my pamphlet.

Think not, madam, I can ever forget my friends at St. Cyr; but from the time I last saw you I have done nothing but write, ruminate, and run about. I am almost ill with it, and I am going to spend a fortnight in the country to tranquillise my mind and finish that unfortunate book, which seems as if it would never come to an end. Present my kind compliments to Captain Périollas and to M. Carraud; remember me to my partner at backgammon; and deign to accept the expression of my respectful friendship, as of my deep devotion.

Balzac put himself forward as a candidate both in Angoulême and Cambrai.

You cannot imagine the scene of commotion into which your article has fallen. Véron sends the 'Revue' to the Devil, as a man throws down the ladder by which he has climbed to the top of a wall.

This poor 'Revue' has fallen into the hands of M. Rabou. Véron promised this latter should come to see me. I went to interrupt Véron in the midst of a rehearsal by Paganini, to speak to him about the 'Prestige.'[1] He remembered nothing whatever about you,—the barbarian.—When I told Véron (whom I entreated to use his influence with Rabou) about the commercial interest I have in you (as you will see further on), he smiled, and I augur well from his grimace.

I will engage that you shall see and read your own article very speedily in 'La Revue,' and that you shall have a letter from Rabou, or I am a fool. For the rest, you will soon see with what fidelity I have devoted myself to your affairs. What you said to me about Cambrai has inspired me with the idea of offering myself as a candidate. Ouf! there! it is out now! I have said it. Now you will say, 'The vile flatterer!' Between two journalists all *finesse* is, I think, thrown away, and

[1] A novel by Henri Berthoud, who was at that time editor of the *Gazette de Cambrai*, and who wished to become assistant editor of *La Revue de Paris*.

the contract which I sign with you now, is an undertaking I do not misunderstand. I begin by doing you as much good service here as will make it worth your while to assist me in the other matter.

With respect to what concerns yourself, I beg you to have an article ready wherein you put out every stitch of canvas. I tell you in confidence, though without making the sign of the Cross, that you should round your thoughts and your periods, impart an indefinable polish to your phrases, balance short sentences with others of a more Ciceronian measure, &c., and bring both poetry and observation to bear upon some new subject.

You will know six weeks hence why I ask you to have this ready.

Now, as to myself, inform me what style of political address would best serve me as a candidate at Cambrai. The forthcoming Assembly may probably be very stormy; it is big with a revolution. Possibly the people of your *arrondissement* may wish to see a Parisian playing the game there, rather than one of their own body; a town always likes to see itself represented by an orator, and if I enter the Assembly, it is with the intention of playing a part in politics, and to give the benefit of it to those who have

adopted me as a fellow-countryman, and at whose hands I shall have received the political baptism of election. All my friends in Paris, right or wrong, build considerable hopes upon me. I shall have for supporters you, if you embrace my idea, 'La Revue de Paris,' 'Le Temps,' 'Les Débats,' 'Le Voleur,' a small journal, and whatever I may be able to do myself betwixt now and then.

I expect from you the same confidence I have shown in you. You see that with you I burn my ships.

To M. Charles Gosselin, Publisher and Bookseller, Paris.

Paris : July 1831.

My dear Gosselin,—I promised to settle Levavasseur's account to-day. Would you have the kindness to remit by the bearer of this a bill at three months for two hundred and fifty francs ?

I told you at the time what difficulty I should have in negotiating bills ; but with this I can pay a debt, and it will be a matter of indifference to you whether you give it me to-day or twenty days hence, as it does not in reality anticipate the payment.

Your nephew will have told you that I have

shut myself up in the house, and I shall not leave it until 'La Peau de Chagrin' is finished. I have well prepared the way for its success. Madame Récamier has insisted on having a reading of it in her *salon*, so that we shall have an immense number of partisans in the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

You would do well to put an advertisement in the papers for the provincial librarians, that they may send you their orders beforehand. You may safely announce it for the 25th; we shall come up to time, or very nearly.

Tout à vous.

And a thousand compliments to Madame Gosselin.

To the Duchesse d'Abrantès, Versailles.

Paris: July 1831.

We never thought of the fêtes for July 27, 28, and 29. It will be impossible for me to have the pleasure of dining with you; I am in requisition for the fireworks, the concert, and the *donna*. You understand, and will forgive me.

You owe me another day, but it must be before Saturday, for I am going into the country for a month.

A thousand friendly things.

Tuesday, if you will. I shall have a letter to hand to Mdlle. Joséphine.[1]

To the Duchesse d'Abrantès.

Paris: 1831.

Pardon me for sending you your money thus clumsily, but the printer's slips might make me forget my debt! Only one thing they cannot disturb in my memory, and that is our delicious *soirée* and all your gracious kindness to me. the flavour of which dwells in my heart still.

A thousand sweet and tender things. And let Sister Joséphine remember me in her orisons—me who remember her amidst my musty books.

Homage and devoted friendship.

To Charles de Bernard,[2] *Besançon.*

Sir,—Let me thank you cordially for the promptitude with which you have spoken of my book.[3] A critic of the 'Journal des Débats' sent me your article. I was agreeably surprised to find my intention so happily understood—a piece of good fortune rare enough in Paris. The analysis

[1] Mlle. Joséphine Junot, who had for some years been a *sœur de charité.*

[2] The novelist, author of *Le Gendre,* on which the play of *Still Waters run Deep* is founded.

[3] *La Peau de Chagrin,* reviewed in a *feuilleton* of *La Gazette de France,* in 1831, by Charles de Bernard, its founder.

of my book is given with marvellous skill and rapidity, without any straining after wit at the author's expense—a mark of good taste on the part of the critic on which I congratulate you. No one desires more than myself to see organs of opinion established in every province; and the votes of the departments are a great power in the present day for conscientious authors. They direct them. I am dealing so frankly with you that you will allow me, I know, to mention a thought which has struck me. You are, perhaps, too hasty in charging the rising literature of the day with an attempt to imitate the masterpieces of foreign authors. Do you think that the *fantastique* of Hoffmann is not to be found in 'Micromégas,' who already existed in Cyrano de Bergerac, where Voltaire found him? Subjects, and the method of treating them, are open to all the world, and the Germans have no more the monopoly of the moon than we have of the sun, or Scotland of the fogs of Ossian. Who dares to flatter himself that he has invented anything? I was not inspired with my idea by Hoffmann, with whom I was unacquainted until after I had thought out my own work; but there is something in this that goes deeper. We fail in patriotism, and we are undermining our nationality and our literary supremacy,

by thus demolishing one another. Did the English critics ever say that 'Parisina' was taken from Racine's 'Phèdre'? and do they go about flinging foreign literature at the heads of authors to stifle their own? No, they do not. Let us imitate them. I am glad, sir, to have a subject which has put me in correspondence with you. I wish every success to your honourable and excellent undertaking, and I beg you to accept the expression of the great respect and regard with which I have the honour to be your devoted servant.

To the Duchesse d'Abrantès, Versailles.

Paris: 1831.

Madam,—M. Mame will have the honour to wait upon you this evening at eight precisely. I have, as we agreed the day before yesterday, laid down the terms of the contract:—three thousand francs a volume for two thousand five hundred copies; withdrawal of the bargain for 'L'Amirante;'[1] full security for the printer and for yourself; payment in cash, on delivery of each volume; finally, complete protection of your interests. I shall be highly pleased to see you come to a settlement, as you will thus spare yourself a host of troubles.

[1] *L'Amirante de Castille*, a romance by Madame d'Abrantès.

Had I been able to leave the house, I should, with all the devotion I profess towards you, have made a point of being present at this discussion; but though M. Mame can battle tooth and nail, you will find him a very amiable man in all that does not concern a publisher's bargain.

To the Duchesse d'Abrantès.

Paris: 1831.

Rabou has your article. You will receive the proofs in two or three days, and you will then read it more at your ease. You have won success. Rabou thinks the article is even better than I told him it was. I am so grieved that you should suffer thus!

I thank you a thousand times for your coffee; it is delicious. I shall come and spend a whole evening with you—the very first I have to spare.

I am greatly busied to complete one of my volumes.

A thousand affectionate things and devoted friendship.

To the Duchesse d'Abrantès.

Paris: 1831.

Then M. Mame, from whom I heard of your illness, never told you I am confined to bed?

But you knew it! You were not told either that I have been to see you several times, and that the answer was that you received no visitors? I then sent to enquire for news of you, when I could hear none from Mame.

Now I shall come and see you as soon as I have got through the work for which the aforesaid Mame is waiting in agony.

No, never have any doubts of me. We shall meet soon. I am glad to have your note, as it informs me that you are out of danger.

Sincere friendship.

To the Duchesse d'Abrantès.

Paris: Thursday 1831.

I got home in the most miserable manner. I waited half an hour at the gates of Versailles, and then I saw a wretched *coucou* appear above the horizon, it could only convey me as far as Sèvres. At Sèvres I hoped to meet with another *coucou*, and I wended my way towards Paris by the glimpses of those lovely and magnificent stars you were contemplating, and, like you, I rejoiced in that awful silence which fills the soul. But I had to walk on! At last, just as I reached Auteuil —and there I thought of the mysterious pavilion— at last I heard the delightful rumble of another

coucou, which landed me at midnight upon the Place Louis XV.; and, in the absence of any carriage, I had to make the best of my own two feet to reach my lodgings. As I got into my bed I said to myself, that the extra quarter of an hour passed under your window was a compensation for all my tribulations; and as I fell asleep, about half-past two in the morning, I flattered myself that there was this shadowy resemblance between us, that you were perhaps sleeping also. And you write to tell me that you were ill. . . .

They have just brought me in your last letter. I will not speak of it. That which has just come has touched me to the heart. You say you are ill and suffering, and without any hope that finer weather will do you any good. Remember that for the soul there arises every day a fresh spring-time and a beautiful fresh morning. Your past life has no words to express it in any language, but it is scarcely a recollection, and you cannot judge of what your future life will be by that which is past. How many have begun to lead a fresh, lovely, and peaceful life at a much more advanced age than yours! We exist only in our souls. You cannot be sure that your soul has come to its highest development, nor whether you receive the breath of life through all your pores, nor whether as yet

you see with all your eyes. Plants and flowers have their gradations, and what numbers of stems in the forests have never seen the sun!

To the Duchess d'Abrantès, Versailles.

Paris: 1831.

You are mistaken with regard to me. I went to see you; you were in the country.

There is one fact which rules over my existence, and that is work—work continued without relaxation, an incessant toil continued for fifteen or sixteen hours a day. In the grip of such a hydra nothing is possible. Friendships that are feeble must perish; they require Bugeaud's *peck of oats* to keep them alive. Strong friendships can live without, and I have depended upon yours. As for writing letters, I cannot; my weariness is too great. You are not aware of how much I owed in 1828; I had only my pen to depend on for my livelihood, and for the means of paying off one hundred and twenty thousand francs. In a few months I shall have paid everything. I shall have realised money; I shall have arranged my poor little homestead. But for the next six months I must endure all the miseries of poverty; I am now draining the last dregs of my anxieties. I have asked help from no one. I have never held

out my hand to beg either for a page of work or a farthing of money. I have hidden my troubles, my sores. But you, who know from experience whether it is easy to earn money by one's pen, you, with the penetrating insight of a woman, will see the depth of that abyss which I now reveal to you, and along the edge of which I have walked hitherto without falling into it. There are still six months before me, which will be very hard; and if even Napoleon grew weary of warfare, I may venture to confess that the struggle with misfortune begins to tax my endurance. I am a poor working man, whom you must come to see or be content to take him when he comes out for a Sunday holiday. No one in the world knows the cost of my visits. I do not say this from pride; to a sincere friend I can say these things with the full trust that we shall not be angry with each other. What can be grander or more honourable than to make a name, to build up a fortune, by the exercise of one's intellect? This only excites envy, and I have little pity for the envious.

Do not believe any evil of me: say to yourself, 'He is working night and day;' and wonder only at one thing—that you have not yet heard of my death. I am going to digest my dinner at the Opéra or at the Italiens. These form my sole diversion, because there I need neither think nor

talk; I have only to look and to listen. Even there I only go occasionally.

To the Duchesse de Castries, Paris.

Paris: October 5, 1831.

Madam,—Your letter was sent after me into Touraine when I was no longer there; and, as I and my correspondence crossed each other on the road, it only reached me very late, so that only to-day have I been able to read your letter. Do not accuse me, therefore, either of negligence or foppery; you load me with so many crimes that I may well take up my defence against a charge involving what would certainly be a crime—that of acting discourteously towards a lady, even though a stranger to me.

Allow me to have now the privilege of speaking frankly, whilst replying to your frank attack, and deign to accept my sincere thanks for the subtle flattery of your complaints, since they show that my writings have made a strong impression on your mind. You have placed me under the unfortunate necessity of speaking of myself, which is an embarrassment, as I am addressing a woman of whose age and position I am ignorant.[1]

[1] Balzac was entirely unacquainted with the name of his correspondent. Balzac afterwards dedicated *L'Illustre Gaudissart* to Madame de Castries.

The 'Physiologie du Mariage,' madam, was a work undertaken for the purpose of defending the cause of women. I knew that if, with the view of inculcating ideas favourable to their emancipation and to a broad and thorough system of education for them, I had gone to work in a blundering way, and betrayed my design at the outset, I should at the best have been regarded as nothing more than the author of a theory more or less plausible. I was therefore obliged to clothe my ideas, to disguise them under a new shape, in biting, incisive words, that should lay hold on the mind of my readers, awaken their attention, and leave behind reflections upon which they might meditate.

Thus, then, any woman who has passed through the storms of life would see that I attribute the blame of all the faults committed by the wives entirely to their husbands. It is, in fact, a plenary absolution.

Besides this, I plead for the natural and inalienable rights of woman. A happy marriage is impossible unless there be a perfect acquaintance between the two before marriage—a knowledge of each other's ways, habits, and character. And I have not flinched from any of the consequences involved in this principle.

Those who know me are aware that I have

been faithful to this opinion ever since I reached the age of reason; and in my eyes a young girl who has committed a fault deserves more interest than she who remaining ignorant lies open to the misfortunes of the future. I am at this present time a bachelor, and if I should marry later in life it will only be to a widow.

Now you see, madam, that my first crime has become transformed into a courageous endeavour, which deserved to have some encouragement; but, like a soldier in the advanced guard of a system which has yet to make its way, I have met the fate of those who fall in leading the forlorn hope.

I have been wrongly judged, misunderstood; some have seen only the outward form, others have seen nothing at all. After 'La Physiologie,' I wrote 'Les Scènes de la Vie privée.' In this book, full of moral and wise counsels, nothing is destroyed, nothing is attacked; I respect accepted creeds, even those in which I have no faith. I am simply an historian, a narrator, and virtue has never been more reverenced than in these scenes. Now, madam, one word about 'La Peau de Chagrin.' That work is not intended to stand alone; it contains—excuse the pedantry of the term—the *premisses* of a work which I shall feel proud to have undertaken, even though I should fail in the at-

tempt; and, since your kindliness towards me is so great—for your solicitude has deeply touched me—read the second edition, under the title of 'Romans et Contes philosophiques.' I have made some progress in my plan. One of the best writers[1] of our time has condescended to lift the veil which conceals my inner thoughts and future plans in an Introduction. You will there see that if at times I am destructive, I also endeavour to rebuild. 'Jésus-Christ en Flandre,' 'L'Enfant maudit,' 'Etude de Femme,' 'Les Proscrits,' 'Les deux Rêves,' will prove to you, perhaps, that I am not destitute of faith, nor of conviction, nor of gentleness. I plough my furrow conscientiously. I strive to be the servant of my subject, and to accomplish my task with courage and perseverance; that is all. 'La Peau de Chagrin' was meant to show forth the present age—our lives, our egotism. The reproduction of these social types has been misunderstood; but I find, madam, my own consolation for this in the sincere approbation conveyed in criticisms like your own, given in friendship and sincerity. Do not think that your letter, full of the touching elegies natural to the female heart, is to me a matter of indifference. These sympathies, coming from afar, are a treasure; they are

[1] Philarète Chasles.

all the fortune I possess; they are the purest pleasures I can taste. And perhaps the feelings you have made me experience would have been even stronger than they are, if, instead of taking up the conventional picture in my book of the woman celebrated for having *never* loved, you had given your sympathy to her who consecrates the beautiful devotedness of woman, her artless love and the rich poetry of her heart.

Pauline is a real personage for me, only more lovely than I could describe her. If I have made her a dream, it is because I did not wish my secret to be discovered.

Pardon me, madam, for seeking to re-establish myself in your good opinion, but you have placed me in a false and unsuitable position; you have formed your idea of me from my books; and from what am I to judge of you? All I possess of yours is a letter—a criminal indictment. You have made yourself my judge, and I could only reply by a justification in form. But, whatever you may think of this letter, let me hope that at some future time we may correspond about a work which I trust will make those chords vibrate in your soul which I have now left mute. This would be a great triumph for me—the only triumph to which I aspire—for you are mistaken if

you suppose me anything but a solitary man, who lives in his own thoughts and ardently desiring to be understood by women.

P.S.—Pressing work has not permitted me to reply to you in a leisurely way. In reading over my letter, I perceive that it might have been made much better—that I ought to have said something quite different. I ought to have thanked you for the interest you express for me, which will remain one of the most touching episodes of my literary life; but if I send this letter such as it is, it is only to prove to you how little my real character, in its natural want of all artifice, resembles the idea which my works give of me to many people.

To Madame Laure Surville, Champrosay.

Saché: November 23, 1831.

My good Sister,—I send you a letter which Madame Carraud has enclosed for you in mine, which gives me the pleasure of writing to you also. There are times when it makes one so happy to take refuge in a heart which has been one's own from infancy! I am already beginning to look backwards. To-day I am depressed, without too well knowing wherefore. I fancied that there must have been something sympathetic in my depression, and that some one of those I love was unhappy.

I should like to be reassured on this point, and to know how things are with you and yours. I would like to hear whether my dear Surville is successful, if you are all well in body and soul, and whether you have had any news of Henry.

My mother has written me a little scrap of a letter about nothing at all; it was as short as a letter of administration. As for me, I have not the time to write as I would wish. If people only knew what it is to give a permanent form to one's ideas, to give them shape and colour, and what lassitude it leaves behind—to be always thinking, like La Fontaine under his tree! If only the result could be La Fontaine! But no, it is only some of Balzac; will that ever be worth anything?

How this doubt torments me on my dark days!—much more than my condition of a bird hopping from branch to branch, I can assure you. And is it not very melancholy, after so many very heavy labours, to have earned as yet nothing for the future—to have nothing but the future itself?

Laura, what will that future be?

Who can answer this question, so full of anxiety? My whole fortune up to this present time consists in the possession of a few true and devoted attachments, but the expressions of those attachments are not all alike. If there are some

persons by whom I am never misunderstood, there are others with whom I am less fortunate. You belong to the first class, my dear, my most dear, sister.

Note.—Balzac, in the midst of the pecuniary difficulties and embarrassments by which he was troubled from the very commencement of his career, had at least the great happiness of finding encouragements, counsels, and not unfrequently inspirations, not only in his noble sister, but also from other women who possessed intellect of a high order. Madame de Berny, who stood foremost amongst these friends, was early removed by death from the affectionate gratitude of her young friend.

M. and Madame de Berny [1] lived at Villeparisis when the De Balzac family resided there; afterwards they established themselves at St.-Firmin, a small town in the Department of l'Oise.

To M. Urbain Canel, Publisher and Editor, Paris.

Saché: November 25, 1831.

My dear Canel,—I have already written to Rabou about the two volumes, and to-day I am sending off to him a tale belonging to the second

[1] *Madame Firmiani* is dedicated to M. Alexandre de Berny.

volume. But, my dear sir, send me at once—immediately, a proof of the 'Dôme des Invalides.' In return for the said proof, you will receive 'Le Départ' for your Carlist book; but I only give this on the express condition that it is placed the first in the volume. So, on receipt of this letter, put under a Post Office band the proof of the 'Dôme.'

As to the gloves, for which I am endeavouring to pay you by 'Le Départ,' remit them for me to the care of Madame de Berny, as in my house everything is *dessus dessous*. They will be quite safe there, because there are glove-boxes to put them in; and these gloves are all the more precious as they come from a publisher, under which name there lies hidden for me that of a friend.

Rabou will tell you all about my distress, and I will tell you no more than you will hear from him, for you well know that, feeling as I do that your purse is like my own, I only apply to you because I cannot help myself.

The fact is, I am neglecting the 'Revue' for the 'Contes bruns,'[1] and that a few days hence my rightful share in these volumes will be finished; and without vanity I may say I have endeavoured to give you my best. I wish the book to be a great success.

[1] An anonymous work, written in concert with Philarète Chasles and Charles Rabou.

Send me Barbier directly. He and Lamartine are the only true poets of our epoch. Hugo has only lucid intervals.

A thousand amiable speeches to the '*miss*.' Go to the elegant Chasles, and give him my remembrances with all that grace which is your characteristic.

Adieu. I wish you all prosperity.

To Baron Gérard, Paris.

Paris: 1831.

I think, Monsieur, I have already sent you a copy of 'La Peau de Chagrin;' but as the idea upon which I am constructing my work is beginning to develop itself, I do not wish you to have the first row of bricks before I can give you the second; you would therefore do me a great favour if you would put the preceding volumes on your chimney-piece, so that they may be torn up or burned page by page.

Present my *hommages* to Madame Gérard; and will you say to Mdlle. Godefroy, that I will make an appointment with her for some day, when we may recall together the memory of my poor and much-loved father.

If I had known the other day that you were disengaged, I should with great pleasure have

cheated you out of a lesson in good and instructive conversation; for if I love you as much as anyone else can love you, I admire you more than all others put together can admire you.

To Madame la Duchesse de Castries, Paris.

Paris: February 28, 1832.

Deign to accept, madam, my affectionate thanks and the expression of my profound gratitude for the mark of confidence you have been pleased to bestow.[1]

It is so rare to meet noble hearts and true friendships; I especially am so destitute of influential friends on whom I may rely, that I accept your gracious offer, although at the risk of losing much by becoming personally known.

If I were not engaged in pressing work, I should before now have presented my *hommages* to you with that frankness of heart which is so much prized by you; but, after many struggles and honourable misfortunes — misfortunes of which one is proud — I have yet to toil on a little longer before I can conquer a few pleasant leisure hours, wherein I may be neither a literary man nor an artist, but may be

[1] Apparently the Duchess had revealed her name, in reply to the letter Balzac had written to her as an unknown correspondent.

myself; and it would be these hours I would desire to consecrate to you, if you permit it.

You are fortunate, madam, to be able to embellish your solitude by poetry without labour; my solitude is filled by labour without poetry. I hope to become better in your society; and I know well that I can only be a gainer in the society of a soul so noble and so richly endowed as your own.

Soon then, madam, I trust to be allowed to lay at your feet a homage as friendly as it is respectful.

To Madame Émile de Girardin, Paris.

Paris: 1832.

My dear Pupil,—Do not make game of your poor master, who knows nothing except by theory. It is said, in I know not what droll story, that a ton of melancholy is not worth an ounce of good cheer. Well, the thousands of tons of pleasure that we may gather in the fields of society will not pay our bills at the end of the month. Ergo, the master is a slave, and, as he has no expectations except from himself, the poor master must work; and he is always in bed at six o'clock, just at the moment when you are kindling into life and lighting the wax candles in your elegant

Cage, which you brighten by the glitter of your wit, where poetry flashes and lightens; then half an hour after midnight he rises to work for twelve hours, while you are reposing after swaying lazily to and fro on an ocean of bright pretty dreams. *Ecco!*

Judge if it does not seem hard; for, after all, I have only one pupil. Nobody comes to console me, 'En la cabane où le coton me couvre;' and when one sees nobody, when one hears of nothing, the things we call glory and reputation are only like beating the air. I am like a child who has forgotten to put peas into his bladder for the Carnival time, and finds it gives forth no sound when he belabours the passers-by. I thank you, therefore, much for your kind letter and your dear thought of me.

A thousand gracious compliments to Madame O'Donnell, my homage to Madame Gay, my friendly regards to Emile, and to you a thousand affectionate obeisances.

To Madame la Duchesse d'Abrantès, Versailles.

Paris : 1832.

Do not be angry with me, I entreat you. I was so much over-fatigued with work, that I fell down at the Opéra as I got out of the carriage. Since my return I have begun to write again, and I do not move from my table.

As soon as I have one moment's liberty I will devote two to you, but all this week I am nailed to my place by proofs. If I did right I ought to write an article for the 'Revue' for the two last Sundays of the month; a work for Mame; and the second dozen of the 'Drôlatiques;' without counting reprints. Is not that enough to keep three or four men well employed? Accept the *hommages*, the affection, the thousand tendernesses, of your devoted servant, who would gladly be free in order to taste the world of goodness you promise so graciously.

To M. le Baron Gérard, Paris.

Paris : 1832.

Sir,—I saw yesterday an artist whose fame has not yet reached France, although he possesses a great deal of talent; I mean M. Gros-Claude, of Geneva. He wishes, under the influence of

that fervour which your talent inspires, to show you the pictures he is about to exhibit at the Musée. I was bold enough to make free with your benevolence, and he is to come and bring them to you between twelve and one to-day, for the term rigorously fixed for their reception expires to-morrow. He will ask nothing of you, beyond your opinion and that of Mademoiselle Godefroy. He is a great friend of Schnetz, and professes the same admiration for you that we all have.[1]

I intended to introduce him to you on Wednesday, unless he should enjoy the more agreeable chance of receiving at your hands those rights of citizenship which you have the art of rendering so precious by that grace and wit which, for my part, I envy every time I have the pleasure of passing an evening in your society.

Vouchsafe to accept the homage of my sincere admiration.

To M. Laurentie, Principal Editor of the 'Rénovateur,' Paris.

Paris: 1832.

Dear Sir,—M. Peyronnet's article has so scared me by its talent that I felt the necessity of working up considerably my article on the oath;

[1] M. Gros-Claude exhibited in Paris on several occasions in the early part of Louis Philippe's reign. His *Buveurs* was engraved, and obtained considerable popularity.

it will be equally opportune next week. The Duke[1] will have made up his mind about being a candidate, and we shall be better able to judge of the article and its propriety in family conclave. But I have done 'La Vie d'une Femme.' I beg you will not put any signature; it would be ostentatious; but mention it, if you will, in the chronicle of events. The article was so illegibly scrawled, that it is being recopied. It will be at the printer's at half-past ten.

A thousand compliments.

To Madame Émile de Girardin, Paris.

Paris: May 1832.

For the last two days I have been cased in flannel and wrapped in a dressing-gown, seeing that I am ill. I was so already on Tuesday evening. I have given myself that swelling in the face you had on your hand.[2] I am in for three more days of suffering and agony; but it is not the cholera, and no one can say, 'M. de Balzac has the cholera; we are going to lose him.' My malady is an ignoble one—an abscess, which must run its prescribed course.

A thousand thanks for your amiable remem-

[1] The Duc de Fitzjames. The article was never written.

[2] Madame de Girardin had hurt her hand by a carriage accident.

brance; but I should have wished for a line from your hand as to the state of your hand, for which I am responsible. Devoted friendship to all your belongings and to yourself.

To M. Chapelain, Physician, Paris.

Paris: May 1832.

Sir,—The power of somnambulism attracts me. How is it you have not sought out some very lucid somnambulist, and set her to grapple with the causes of the epidemic?[1] Science is interested in the discovery. It would redound to our eternal honour. If I had not been confined to my bed for the last week, and still in a state which forbids my going out, I, a theorist, would have descended, or rather risen, to the honours of practice, and sought for a somnambulist, and have endeavoured to convince myself of the nonentity or of the mighty power of our discovery, and so ascertained whether it is limited or infinite.

Excuse me, sir, and pardon the curiosity which has prompted this letter, attribute it to the desire I feel to know whether we are deceiving ourselves or not.

Accept, sir, my affectionate compliments.

[1] The cholera.

To Madame Émile de Girardin, Paris.

Paris : May 31, 1832.

We are both of us, madam, destined to know what a tilbury can do. Not far from the spot where you were so roughly treated, I came in contact with the heroic paving-stones of July. This head—this handsome head—in short, the head you know—has suffered in the most unhappy manner, and I am by no means sure that some screw or wheel has not been loosened in my brain. Joking apart, I am in my bed. I have been copiously bled, for the first time in my life. I have been ordered not to write, not even to think—to remain perfectly quiet—and here is your letter just come to awaken all the graceful and *mondaines* ideas which always either precede or follow you. You have recalled all the delights of idol-worship, and even a debt which I ought to have paid on the very evening of my tumble ; but, as I hope not to die just yet, I shall have the happiness of seeing you as soon as I can go out, and I regret extremely not being able to attend the celebration of this delightful anniversary, by coming to your *soirée*, where, in spite of all you say, I should have seen nothing except yourself.

A thousand affectionate respects.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Paris.

Paris : June 1, 1832.

• Madam,—I delayed writing to you till I could send you at the same time the 'Contes drôlatiques' and the 'Scènes de la Vie privée,' but meanwhile I tumbled out of a tilbury. I escaped death as by a miracle. However, I am in bed, bled, dieted, and under the severest prohibition against writing, reading, or thinking. I have seen our good, and great, and beloved Captain Périollas. I am afraid he will frighten you; and I write secretly to you, very sorry not to have answered you when I was in the country, busy finishing my work.

The egotism of the author killed for the moment the egotism of friendship.

Yet your letter moved me to tears. I should like to answer you on all points. I will do so, at the risk of increasing the pain I suffer; for my head went on the pavement of July with a pretty hard knock, and for twenty minutes I could not bring my thoughts together.

As to politics, be quite sure that I guide myself by a severe and high probity, and, in spite of the anathema pronounced by M. Carraud against all journalists, believe me I shall neither write nor

act, except by conviction. My political life and creed cannot be appreciated in a moment. If I ever count for anything in the government of the country, it is later that I must be judged. I fear nothing. I care more for the esteem of a few persons, amongst whom you are one of the first, both in friendship and in high intellect—one of the noblest souls I have ever known—than I can care for the esteem of the masses, for whom I have, in truth, a profound contempt. There are some vocations which must be obeyed, and something drags me irresistibly towards glory and power. It is not a happy life. There is in me a worship of woman, and a need of loving, which have never been completely satisfied. Despairing of ever being loved and understood as I desire, by the woman I have dreamt of (never having met her, except under one form—that of the heart), I have thrown myself into the tempestuous region of political passions and into the stormy and parching atmosphere of literary glory.

It is possible I may fail in both; but be assured that if I have desired to live the life of the present century, instead of passing on happy and obscure, it is only because pure and moderate happiness has failed me. When one has a whole fortune to make, it is best to try to make it great and

illustrious; for, other things being equal, it is better to suffer in a high sphere than in a low one, and I prefer the thrusts of a poniard to the pricks of a pin. Otherwise, you are quite right in all you say. If ever I should find a wife and a fortune, I could resign myself very easily to domestic happiness; but where are these things to be found? Where is the family which would have faith in a literary fortune? It would drive me mad to owe my fortune to a woman, unless I loved her, or to owe it to flatteries; I am obliged, therefore, to remain isolated.

In the midst of this desert be assured that friendships such as yours, and the assurance of finding a shelter in a loving heart, are the best consolations I can have. Your letter has been very precious to me. It has been exactly the refreshment needed by my wearied and anxious soul, which is rather irritated than tender. My strongest desire is still for a life in the country; but it must be with good neighbours and a happy home. In whatever country this is to be found, there would I go to meet it; and I would do no more work in literature, except as an amateur, for the sake of occupation and not to be idle—as if one ever could be idle where there are trees to look at and to plant!

To dedicate myself to the happiness of a woman is my constant dream, but I do not believe marriage and love can exist in poverty.

You will not forget to remember me to everybody, and you will divine all I ought to say. My head and my hand are both fatigued. My mother is beside me, and counts every line.

Find here a thousand tender regards from your wholly devoted.

To Madame Émile de Girardin, Paris.

Paris: 1832.

Imagine me, handsome as I am, cruelly disfigured for eight days past; and it has seemed very odd to be more ugly than I am by nature. I only got out yesterday, but you will guess to whom the first visit was paid. To-day or to-morrow I shall have the happiness to thank you for all the gracious friendly things you have written to me, and to see you again.

I have suffered horribly, and now I must make up for lost time. I must work for those wretched horses of mine, which I cannot teach to live on poetry. What a grand use that would be for poetry! Ah, a dozen alexandrine lines instead of a feed of oats! Such a discovery would beat the steam-engine.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Saché: June 10, 1832.

My dear Mother,—I am safely landed, but horribly tired. Passengers were asked to show their passports wherever there were gendarmes.[1] To-day I am rested. However, I still feel some of my bruises, principally in the left arm; there are certain movements I find it impossible to make. But, any rate, I am here, having well got over my fatigue. Two days were barely sufficient. My papers are put in order; to-morrow, I begin to work. You will send the letter here annexed by Paradis.[2] And now mark well all the following instructions:

1. First of all, copy for me the article headed 'L'Épicier' in the volume of the 'Silhouette,' which you will find on the second shelf where the quartos are, near the door of my room.

2. You must send me your copy of the 'Contes bruns.' As what I have written there will be reprinted in the 'Causeries,'[3] you can't set much value on what Chasles and Rabou have written. However, you need only tear out of

[1] This was after the insurrections of June 5 and 6, 1832.

[2] A servant.

[3] This alludes to a book—*Causeries du Soir*—which never appeared. *Le Médecin de Campagne* is dedicated to Madame de Balzac.

your copy the 'Conversation[1] entre Onze Heures et Minuit' and 'Le Grand d'Espagne.' Madame de Berny will let you have some marked-out corrections, and perhaps a volume of the 'Chouans,' with the corrections to it. Make them all up into a parcel, and send them to me at once, with what I am going to tell you about.

You will take a copy of vols. iii. and iv. of the 'Scènes de la Vie privée,' and you will write outside, 'Presented by the Author to M. de Manne;' then you will go to M. de Manne, and you will tell him that I have had a fall, and cannot go out. (Make yourself lovely.) And this is what you are to ask him. Mark this well:

You will look first into the large 'Biographie universelle' for the Life of Bernard Palissy, which is under *B* or *P* (you had better even send me the volume containing it); you will read that article and take a note of all the *books quoted*, whether by Palissy himself or written by others about him. Take this note—which must be very exact—to M. de Manne, and ask him to let you have these books for me.

Go and read likewise the notice of Bernard Palissy in papa's 'Biographie,' which is at Laura's,

[1] *Le Grand d'Espagne* is now inserted in *La Muse du Département*, and *La Conversation entre Onze Heures et Minuit* forms part of *Œuvres Diverses*.

and ascertain if there are not works quoted there which may not be in mine. Take a note of these, that you may ask M. de Manne for them likewise.

If M. de Manne should not have them all, and provided they are not too dear, you will have to buy them. You might see Gosselin, and tell him that six days after the receipt of these books, which I shall look for with impatience, he will have the manuscript needed to finish the fourth volume of the 'Contes philosophiques.' I require them to write a grand and beautiful work completing the volume, in which the only thing not previously published ought necessarily to be very remarkable in its kind.[1]

My horses must, and I mean that they shall (tell this to Leclercq), each go out *every day* for half an hour.

I have three hundred pages of manuscript to do—to think them, to write them—for 'La Bataille;' I have a hundred pages to add to the 'Conversations,' which, at the rate of ten pages a day, is three months' work, and at the rate of twenty, forty-five days; and it is *physically* impossible to write more than twenty, and thus I only

[1] This was meant to be *La Recherche de l'Absolu.* That work, however, never came out till 1834; *Louis Lambert* terminated the volume instead.

ask for forty days; and during those forty days I shall have Gosselin's proofs to correct also.

I only write once a week to Madame de Castries and to Madame de Berny; and then only a few words. All I can do is, to give you a letter for M. Pichot.

It was precisely to avoid all affairs, and all interruptions, that I came here and am going to Angoulême. You can hardly imagine how much of my time writing a business letter swallows up. To say a week is hardly too much. Madame de Berny when at St.-Firmin saw what head work meant. It took me ten days to invent and think over 'Les Célibataires.'[1] To bear with all the vexations of my professional work, and those caused by money difficulties as well, is enough to make one quit the world.

I see no one at Tours.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Saché: June 1832.

My dear, beloved Mother,—Your news about Henry fills me with joy. M. de Margonne knows nothing yet. I will tell him when he comes back from town this evening.

[1] This alludes to the first story in *Les Célibataires*—'Le Curé de Tours.'

Good boy; he has thought of you, and I envy him the happiness to be the first to make you happier. This has caused me a cruel regret for the course I have chosen, as it has not enabled me to do my duty towards you. Poor mother! this is an event which will give us both courage.

On Wednesday I shall take to the coach office the MS. of the tale which Gosselin has yet to receive; this is as much as to tell you that I am at work day and night, for the MS. will be at least sixty folios, and very tired I am of writing.

It was imperative that I should give a triumphant refutation to the people who say I am mad.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Angoulême.

Saché: July 2, 1832.

Dear Friend,—Your letter found me in Touraine, where I have taken refuge to finish the three works required before I can begin my travels. I am only sixty leagues from you; is it not a temptation to me? If the work were not already begun, to which a drop of coffee on this page bears witness, I should be already at the Poudrerie; but for the moment I must be contented to answer you, for amongst all my letters yours has been read first. Would you believe it?

fame is conveyed to me through the post office by means of letters, and I daily receive three or four from women. They come from the depths of Russia, of Germany, &c.; I have not had one from England. Then there are many letters from young people. It has become fatiguing. With what delight I open the letter of an old, true, and known friend!

Thanks a thousand times, from the depths of my soul, for your precious friendship. Your letter came at the moment of a little *spleen*, which was caused by the sad prospect of a probable overthrow of the little fortune that I have gained by the strokes of my pen. Decidedly we must wait for peace before we attempt our enterprise.[1]

If you knew how I work! I am a galley slave to pen and ink, a true dealer in ideas. I am just now finishing the fourth volume of the 'Contes philosophiques:' I have only a few pages to write. 'Les Chouans' is being reprinted, and it has to be corrected. I am preparing, besides, a large work called 'La Bataille,' and then I have to finish a book in two volumes octavo—'Conversations entre Onze Heures et Minuit.' It is a great pleasure to me to find you like the fourth volume of the 'Scènes de la Vie privée';' for I value that

[1] This enterprise consisted in editing his own works himself.

volume. I could not write it now; it requires youth and observation.

A thousand kind things to M. Carraud. As for you, there is no need of grand words; you understand all that a friendly heart offers you.

I never think of you but to find some sweet remembrance. Ah! if it had only been the Pyrenees, I should have been able to see you; but it is necessary that I go and climb about at Aix, in Savoy, to run after some one who, perhaps, will laugh at me—one of those aristocratic women of whom you no doubt have a horror; one of those angelic beauties to whom one ascribes a soul; a true duchess, very disdainful, very loving, subtle, witty; a coquette, like nothing I ever yet have seen, and who says she loves me, who wants to keep me in a palace at Venice (for I tell you everything), and who desires I should write nothing, except for her; one of those women who must be worshipped on one's knees when they wish it, and whom one has such pleasure in conquering; a woman to be dreamt of, jealous of everything. Ah! it would be much better to be in Angoulême at the Poudrerie—very sensible and quiet, listening to the rolling of the mills, learning from you how to pocket a billiard ball,

to laugh and to talk . . . than thus to lose one's time and one's life!

Adieu. Think that there is a soul in me, and that the soul likes to think of you.

I am here for a fortnight; and, if I can, if you are at the Poudrerie—if—if—I will certainly try!

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Saché: July 28, 1832.

My dear, beloved Mother,—I have the two parcels; but the first only arrived on the 26th, and the second will be to-day at Azay; I am sending for it while writing you this letter, to calm the apprehensions my two preceding letters may have occasioned. Madame D—— is expected daily. You will understand that this takes up a good deal of my time, for I must smooth the ways. Therefore I cannot roam the fields or work as much as I would.

M. Dumont requires an entire day of me. I sent him back the documents by post, and this has retarded Gosselin: instead of sending his packet to the coach office to-day, I can hardly do so before Saturday; I have thirty pages to do yet. This letter-writing kills me. I have to write to two people at the same time; besides which, I have other letters to write.

There is one thing, however, I should like to be certain about, as it would make such a great alteration in my position and modify all my plans. Work is impeded by this uncertainty; for as *she*[1] is expected from day to day, I go three times a week to Méré. Now, it is impossible to reconcile this state of things with work. Nevertheless, Gosselin having been satisfied—and he shall be so this week—I shall quickly polish off 'La Bataille,' unless the battle of love begins before; but even then I shall give you the funds to honour the August bill, and you will give him the bill I now send you. This is what is called a renewal.

I start on Monday for Angoulême. Send your answer there. For the next forty days I shall neither write to nor answer anyone, except yourself. Send my letters, however, in the parcels containing proofs.

State exactly the points on which you require an answer, that I may have the less to write, for I shall be overwhelmed with work. In my eagerness to get ourselves out of difficulty I shall do impossibilities. If by good fortune I am able to work as well as I did the last two days I was at St.-Firmin, *I shall save ourselves.* To carry

[1] This evidently refers to some matrimonial project.

us on till then it will be necessary to raise a loan, to be repaid on September 1 or 15.

Farewell, my beloved mother. I embrace you with all my heart, like a poor unhappy child who yearns sadly to press his mother to his bosom. Farewell. Your illness made me very anxious, and you give me *not one detail about yourself*; it is you who should write.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Angoulême: July 19, 1832.

My dear Mother,—Surely you must have received a letter from me touching all that you ask in yours of the 16th, which I have received to-day. I explained why I wrote no more; I shall not go over this explanation again. What you say about my silence is one of those things which, to use your expression, makes me grasp my heart with both hands; for it is incredible I should be able to produce all I do (I am obeying the most rigorous necessity); so if I am to write I ought to have more time, and when I rest, I wish to lay down and not to take up my pen again. Really, my poor dear mother, this ought to be understood between us, once for all; otherwise, I shall have to renounce all epistolary intercourse.

What am I to answer you about the corn-

dealer? I am working night and day to make money to pay him. I have stated—the chances of illness apart—at what date the 'Conversations entre Onze Heures et Minuit' and 'La Bataille' will be finished; after these two books I shall do 'Les Trois Cardinaux.' These three works, with one volume of 'Contes drôlatiques,' and one volume of 'Contes philosophiques,' will amply suffice to meet everything.

Seeing that I shall have no money till forty days are past, I can do nothing before that time; this is my answer to everyone, for, unless I sell everything for a song and leave myself as naked as John the Baptist, I see no other way of raising money.

The lady with the manuscript is an adventurer; you may answer, that I have no time to devote to the works of others. As a general rule, why do you not meet everything with a reference to my absence and my return? Now, my good mother, let me tell you that I arrived here the day before yesterday in the evening. I rested all yesterday, because the journey and the heat had fatigued me horribly, the more so as I had travelled the distance from Saché to Tours on foot at midday. And this morning I was about to make the first dash at my work, when your letter came and com-

pletely upset me. Do you think it is possible to have artistic inspirations after being brought suddenly face to face with such a picture of my miseries as you have traced? Do you think that if I did not feel them, I should work as I do?

I have told you, with tears in my eyes and oppression at my heart, that it was impossible my manuscript should be ready before August 10, and on the 10th we shall have eighteen hundred francs. See if you cannot arrange everything in Paris till that time. If I can get no money, well, I must let them sue me, and pay the law costs. It will be paying rather high interest. You see all resolves itself at last into hard work, and hard work into tranquillity.

If Gosselin should take it into his head not to send me proofs, *ce serait du joli!* Why, it would be the ruin of my reputation. I would tear up all our agreements in the face of the world. The work I have sent him has cost me thirty days' and fifteen nights' labour, and I must have at least two proofs. I await them with impatience.

I rise at six in the evening; I correct 'Les Chouans;' then I work at 'La Bataille' from eight till four in the morning, and during the day I correct what I have written in the night. This

is my life. Do you know any one more busily occupied?

Farewell, my good mother. Try and achieve impossibilities, which is what I am doing on my side. My life is one perpetual miracle. I embrace you with all my heart—and with deep sorrow, for I am making you as miserable as myself.

To Madame Émile de Girardin, Paris.

Angoulême: July 29, 1832.

Will you allow me to entrust you with a secret? Being at a distance, may I make both question and answer, and shall I be presuming beyond the fact if I write you down good-natured, ingenious, and obliging?

First, do not say where I am, nor who is writing to you, nor what I am going to have the impertinence, the overweening audacity, to ask you. If you refuse, let it be with one of the prettiest *noes* you ever pronounced, and still keep my secret.

I have finished a book called 'Etudes de Femmes.' I must have a preface written by a woman. Will you do it for me?

If you deem me worthy of a few penfuls of ink, if you will consent to blacken your finger-tips, if —if—it is a case for a thousand *ifs*. Write me one little word. I write to you from Angoulême,

whither I have come to have my hair cut, and until August 20 your gracious answer, whatever it may announce, will find me here. Then, if you grant my prayer, I will send you a few words touching that same preface, which would constitute nine hundred and ninety-nine parts in a thousand of the success of my book, and my greatest sorrow will be that I can never render you a similar service.

Did it occur to you that I was thinking of you and Émile when the wax candles were scintillating? When your ears buzzed, when you were gay, did you think I was near you in spirit? No; you would all have quizzed me very likely —that is, if you classed me with the folks who have short memories, and God knows if I have a short one! Do you know that it is impossible when one is *en province* not to turn one's mental gaze towards that drawing-room of yours, where all is wit and wisdom, where praise must pay a penalty to sarcasm, and yet we still come back to be made dupes, because all there is charming, and we prefer enchanting illusions to truths which are bitter. At least I am so constituted—ready to be run away with by a word like Astolfo on his hippogriff.

You will not forget to remember me to all who

have a title to my remembrances, and you will express for me all that I ought to think.

Answer me sincerely, and if it be *yes*, let me practise all the encroachments of friendship; for you, *Delphine divine*,—as that poor dear madman Gérard used to say,—and Émile, can never doubt the sincerity of the sentiments of your affectionate

H. DE B.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Angoulême: July 29, 1832.

My tiny mother, as Laura says, I have received to-day the parcel of proofs; but do explain to Gosselin, that I must have *all that has been set up in type*, the entire work, before my eyes, in order to correct it; for it is not of the ordinary routine, like other works of the kind. Surely M. Crapelet has enough type to let Gosselin have at his disposal a hundred and twenty, or a hundred and forty, miserable pages, which is the length of this 'Notice.'[1]

As for me, if I correct slip by slip I shall lose a fortnight over the work, whereas if I have the whole before me, and correct it at one stretch, it would only take me three days; and my hours are so precious that everything must bend to the

[1] The first edition of *Louis Lambert*, which is the work here referred to, appeared under the title of *Notice biographique sur Louis Lambert.*

necessity of economising time. Explain this thoroughly to Gosselin aforesaid.

Now, dear mother, I am going to surprise you by the despatch within a very short time of a *parcel of manuscript*, as the tradespeople say, wherewith you can raise a hundred louis. Necessity inspired me for a whole week, and I seized opportunity and inspiration by the forelock. Mame will have the task of arranging all this. At the same time and place, I will tell you how, for the thing referred to consists of three articles, which will come out, without committing me, in three papers, and they will make a book for Mame.

Farewell, I throw myself into your arms and embrace you with effusion. Pay everything in the way you mention; I on my side will make money strenuously, and we will balance at the end of a given time receipts against expenses.

The corrections of 'Les Chouans' are jogging on; I have a volume ready.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Saché: July 1832.

My dear Mother,—Here are all the particulars I can give you, and for which you asked me.

Since I arrived here I have been constantly employed over Gosselin's work; for I feel that to

make myself a name, I must be always doing better and better; and, not having received in good time my materials for the two tales which were easy, I have undertaken one which was beyond my powers; but at last it is finished in manuscript, and I have only the proofs to work at. However, up to the present the work in question, 'The Memoir of Dumont,' my correspondence and my visit have absorbed my whole time.

As to Madame D——. She wrote me a few polite words to thank me for the 'Scènes.' Clara told me the last thing, that she would not come to Touraine till the month of October; so I shall go to Angoulême, not to be six months with M. de Margonne. I am going to finish 'La Bataille' straight off; and as I have but little to do to finish the 'Conversations entre Onze Heures et Minuit,' all will be ready in time, and I shall return to Touraine in the month of October.

But my dear mother, I am in a state of continual vexation and apprehension. I cannot send M. Dieulouard[1] any manuscript until August 1; what am I to do? Neither my imagination nor my courage are at fault, but there is no time. This year I shall have published eight volumes octavo. I can issue no more, even though I

[1] The manager of *La Revue de Paris.*

should have something else; accordingly I have, much against the grain, and with the view to extricate myself at one stroke, made up my mind to write two or three pieces for the theatre! No greater misfortune could befall me; but necessity is the stronger of the two, and I cannot otherwise retrieve my position. I shall see if I cannot make use of some one, so as not to compromise my name.

But whether I succeed with the lady in question or no, it is impossible that the affair should come off in time to serve my interests. The more we go on the less likely is the success of the book-business. I leave you the mistress to make any sacrifices you may deem necessary. If you can sell the horses, sell them; if you wish even to get rid of Leclercq, pay him and send him away. I shall travel till I have set myself up again. Those two papers quarrelling with me, egged on by the petty intrigues of my enemies, was what upset everything. I was in great distress about it for a week! I should want at least six weeks of perfect tranquillity, to remit to you the four thousand eight hundred francs I am to have for the two works I am going to write. If you cannot find the means to secure this, write me word. I am resolved to turn everything into money, and

begin again from a fresh start. It would be absurd, for, barring these six months of pressure, I have never been in a fairer position. Sooner or later, literature, politics, journalism, a marriage or some grand speculation will make my fortune. We must suffer a little longer; would I were the only one to suffer! During the last four years I have a score of times been tempted to expatriate myself. But you are now in a suffering state, and are forced by necessity to become one of the causes of my secret heart-aches. I have loaded you with nearly all my troubles, besides your own, and this is torture to me.

You ask me to write to you in full detail; but, my dear mother, have you yet to be told what my existence is? When I am able to write, I work at my manuscripts; when I am not working at my manuscripts, I am thinking of them; I never have any rest. How is it my friends are not aware of this? I shall end by stopping my ears against all remonstrance, knowing in my conscience that I am not to blame. And now I will, as succinctly as possible, put down in writing what are the things most necessary to be done.

Go, if you possibly can, and find M. Pichot, to obtain his consent for our going together to see Mame; for what can I write to him? What! my

poor mother, you ask me to write *five letters*, all of them polite civilities and instructions, to five judges! Why, what in the world could I do? I had better go at once and throw myself into the Indre!

You will have seen that our ideas coincided as to the tilbury and the horse and Leclercq. As to the last mentioned, you might send him here, for I am like one of the family.

Farewell. I must return to my work, in order to complete my *tour de force*. I embrace you with all my heart.

Of course, if you can get the price I said for the horse, sell him. In any case you must keep all that appertains to the harness, &c., and sell the horse as he stands.

The numbers of 'L'Artiste' containing 'La Transaction' are still of much use to me.

Farewell.

To Madame de Balzac.

Angoulême: July 30, 1832.

My dear beloved Mother,—As soon as this letter reaches you, look in my library on the lower shelf among the duodecimos for 'Le Jeune Irlandais,' and send it me by the diligence. Make them despatch it immediately, for I want it very

urgently. Don't forget a little money (I owe thirty francs already), nor the *locatelli* lamp: it is meant as a surprise for Madame Carraud.

Heavens! how Gosselin irritates me! He doesn't know how much time he makes me lose by not sending me the whole of 'Lambert' set up at once. Does he not see that I am in a vein of work, and likely to perform miracles? Now I can answer for my 'Notice,' it will make the sale in one day of thousands of copies of 'Les Contes philosophiques.'

Farewell, little mother. I shall not stay here longer than August 20. Matters have been arranged at Aix, so that I can go and stay there *incognito.*

I have till October 1 before I return to Saché, since *milady* does not return till then. By that time I shall have added mightily to my reputation —you will see how much!

Farewell. I have not time to say more. Win my lawsuits! A thousand caresses from my heart. Your much loving Son.

To Madame de Balzac.

Angoulême: 1 August 1832.

My dear Mother,—I cannot write to you to-day in detail. It is eleven o'clock at night; I

am extremely ill from overwork; and if I had not feared to alarm you, I should have made Madame Carraud write to you; but what I have to say is most confidential.

I have worked for a hundred and sixty hours at Gosselin's book. I beg you, my dear, well-beloved mother, to take it to him yourself, and make him write to assure me that I shall have a fresh proof of it at Lyons *poste restante.*

Look yourself that the proof be on white paper, and that it be all in pages.

Impress upon him from me that the least costly and most expeditious way will be to have all set up afresh and put into pages immediately.

My good mother, my reputation and future career are involved in this; look to it, that I shall not have risked bringing on an illness for absolutely nothing at all. I must have this proof, and an assurance that I shall have it. Lastly, send me back by the Messageries Royales, *bureau restant* Lyons, the fresh copy I am sending to Gosselin; and take care that this manuscript be despatched simultaneously with the proofs by post, so that if any words have been omitted, I may look them out in my manuscript.

This is all I have to say on the Gosselin business. Now to other matters.

You will send the two letters enclosed to their destination. You will not let Buloz know anything. If he should come, tell him to come and see you on Friday August 17 at four o'clock. On that day you will receive, *bureau restant*, a parcel, containing the manuscript for the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' and the terms. In that parcel will be a letter, wherein I answer in detail all your questions. I hope to be better, and to explain all. Now in sending the letter to M. Pichot (Rue du Gros Chenet), you will send word to him by Paradis *en grand tenue*, that you have received some manuscripts from me, and that you beg him to call on Thursday at a certain hour, or at any time during the day, as you may please, You would do well to receive him at my place, if he comes.

Now if he does come, this is what you will tell him in succinct terms:

That the 'Revue de Paris' must engage to pay me two hundred francs per sheet, without deductions for blanks. That I must be printed in *pica*.

And that in his letter he must tell me that so long as he manages the 'Revue,' nothing disagreeable shall be said of me therein; lastly, that if I please, I may reprint my articles as books; I only intend the 'Revue' to have the right

of the first publication; that is to say, that the articles supplied by me shall not re-appear in any other paper.

If he agree to all this, you will hand him the manuscript, impressing it upon him that he must have the whole set up at once and send me the proof on *white paper* with the manuscript, so that the whole should reach me at Lyons *bureau restant* on August 21.

If M. Pichot should refuse, you will say: 'Then let the matter drop.' You will receive by the *Buloz parcel* further particulars as to my journey, the money to be sent me, &c.

Pardon my curtness, beloved mother; for two consecutive nights I have sat up, and I must rise at three to-morrow, to carry this parcel from La Poudrerie to Angoulême, in order to make sure of its going.

You will receive the books from Saint Cyr by another despatch; I am having the maps copied, which will cost me a good sum.

Farewell, I embrace you from my heart. Never was I so exhausted, and you will never know what an effort it has been to write to you. I embrace you with all my heart, my well beloved.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Angoulême: August 1832.

My dear and well beloved Laura,—I have just received your few words, and despite my fatigue, I cannot possibly help writing to you. You have moved me to tears by what you say of my poor mother. I dare not write to her, for yesterday I answered her somewhat shortly, and I never shall be able to express all I feel for her.

Thanks, dear sister; the devotedness of loving hearts does one so much good! You have restored to me that energy, which until now has enabled me to conquer the difficulties of my life! Yes! you are right, I will not stop, I will go on, I shall reach my object, and some day you will see me counted amongst the great intellects of my country!

But what efforts are needed to attain this! They break down the body, and when weariness comes, discouragement follows! This 'NOTICE BIOGRAPHIQUE SUR LOUIS LAMBERT' is a work in which I wished to measure my strength with Goethe and Byron, with 'Faust' and 'Manfred,' and it is a tournament that is not yet finished. I have not yet corrected the proofs.

I do not know whether I shall succeed, but

this fourth volume of the 'Contes philosophiques' ought to be a final answer to my enemies, and ought to foretell an incontestable superiority.

Thus the poor artist should be forgiven his weariness, his discouragement, and above all his momentary forgetfulness of all things foreign to his subject. 'Louis Lambert' has cost me so much labour! What numbers of books I have been obliged to read and to read again before I could write this work! It will, perhaps, one of these days, turn science into new roads. If I had made it a purely learned work, it might have attracted the attention of thinkers, who as it is, will not condescend to look at it. But if by chance it should find its way into their hands, they *may* speak of it—perhaps! . . .

I believe 'Louis Lambert' to be a grand work! Why speak again of its conclusion? You know what made me select it? You are always timid. This conclusion is probable, and there are melancholy instances which prove, alas! too surely that it is so. Does not the doctor say, that great intellects which are too much worked are always on the brink of madness?

I hope soon to have finished 'La Bataille' and 'Les Conversations.' The money I shall receive for them ought to be sufficient for all that is

needed. After this enormous labour, I shall make a journey on foot. It will be necessary for my health. Then, instead of resting, I shall begin the 'Les Trois Cardinaux,' which will be interspersed with *petits contes drôlatiques.* It is all I shall be able to do between now and winter; and this winter, if my position does not improve, I have decided to try the theatre, anything to relieve my mother from her present anxieties. I will sacrifice for her all my political prospects; but do not tell her anything about this. Again, thanks for your letter, and forgive the poor artist the discouragement which called it forth. The game is begun, and I play such high stakes! I must go on. My books are the only answer I shall ever deign to make to those who are beginning to attack me.

Yes; you are right, my progress is real, and my infernal courage will some day be rewarded. Persuade my mother to believe in this, my dear sister; tell her to bestow on me the charity of her patience; she will reap the recompense of all her devotion! Some day, I hope, a little glory will repay her for all! Poor mother! the same imagination with that she has endowed me keeps her from ever knowing repose! Do not I also know this? Tell my mother that I love her, as I did when a child. Tears overcome me whilst writ-

ing these lines, tears of tenderness and despair, for I feel what the future will be, and I want this devoted mother to be present on the day of triumph! When shall I reach it? Take care of our mother, Laura, both now and ever. As for you and your husband, never doubt my feelings; if I cannot write to you, let your tenderness be indulgent, never accuse my silence; say to yourselves: 'He thinks of us, he talks to us.' Understand me, good friends, you, my oldest and ever-enduring affections!

After my long meditations, and heavy work, I rest myself in your hearts, as in a sweet spot where nothing can come to harm me! Some day, when my works are developed, you will understand how many hours were needful before I could have thought or written so many things; you will then absolve me from all that has displeased you, and you will pardon, not the egotism of the man (for the man has none), but the egotism of the thinker and worker.

Adieu, my good sister. I have given you the time to-day which I intended to dedicate to a letter to Madame de Castries. She can do without it. You will tell mamma, that though I have not written to her, there is in this letter the tenderest outpouring of the heart for her; say many

friendly and kindly things to your husband, from me, his brother-in-heart; and I thank you much for telling me how his affairs are going on.

I embrace you, dear consoler, who brings me hope. Your letter has revived me; after reading it, I shouted, and cried, 'Forward, soldier! throw thyself into the fight!'

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Angoulême: August 21, 1832.

My good Mother,—I have just received your letter, and thank you much, my darling, for I was very anxious—I thought you ill.

I am off to-morrow the 22nd for Lyons, but I shall not arrive until the 25th. I shall borrow a hundred and fifty francs of M. Carraud, which you will send back to him by the Messageries, as they want no money paid for them in Paris. A letter of advice is not needed, the thing is all settled.

Simultaneously with my departure, beloved mother, I will despatch to your address a packet, containing the acceptances, a letter, the books for Saint Cyr to be returned to M. Villemejane, librarian, as coming from M. Périollas; together

with the manuscript for Buloz of the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' with my terms.

I have worked a good deal; I shall have by next January three volumes in octavo for Mame. I have completely changed my mind as to what I wrote to him. I have thrown together into a collected form the 'Études de Femmes,' the 'Conversations, &c.,' forming three original volumes, which I intend for him; but 'La Bataille' must appear before everything else.

Copying the maps, twenty francs; passport, ten francs; I owed fifteen francs for discount here; then there were bouquets for birthdays, fifteen francs, and ten francs lost at cards: total, seventy francs. I had left fifteen francs owing on my fare. So that, with postage of letters, I have spent the hundred francs you sent me.

The hundred and fifty francs I am now borrowing will hardly take me to Lyons. However, if the three hundred francs I shall get at Lyons will not carry me on far, with all my economy, we must communicate again. As soon as I arrive at Aix, I shall write.

On the 25th I shall be at Lyons, where I shall stay at least two days.

Fancy passing by Clermont, and not being able to ramble about the country—eh!

I shall come back laden with work; and then we shall pay our debts, and our enemies will wax lean with vexation. Once more, my mother, let me 'entreat' you to look well that my Lyons proofs be on *white paper*, and that I have *two* sets, and that the whole of the manuscripts be sent back to me, even those of the first proofs of 'Lambert.'

You tell me nothing about Pichot?

As to Buloz, I will let you know through what channel the proofs can be sent to me at Aix. I have still another article ready for each 'Revue,' and famous ones!

Farewell! I shall write again this evening with the packet; but as I had to advise you of the despatch of the aforesaid packet, I was bound to have a chat with the mother. A good kiss on your eyelids, darling mother, and farewell.

'Lambert' is a fine thing, and will make a sensation. I am waiting with impatience to be at Lyons to give a last curl with the comb to this great work, which has nearly been the death of me.

Your tenderly loving Son.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Angoulême : Tuesday, noon,
August 22, 1832.

I am off to Lyons; time presses, for we are here at La Poudrerie, and the coach starts at two o'clock; so, darling mother, I must be brief.

I entreat you to keep a most exact account of the sum of ten thousand francs, and to carefully note every item of expenditure, even the most trifling. And on the opposite page you must open an account of each successive sum that I shall send you, specifying its source. *Remark*: No credit given to the newspapers; once the article is received, send for the money and the account. I will send you my authority to receive for each paper.

Touching the 'Revue des Deux Mondes': You will request M. Buloz to call at my house (let it always be at my house); you will show him the manuscript, but do not let him take it away, because you are only my agent and ignorant of the usual practice. Be excessively polite. You will tell him that I desire a letter from him, pledging himself to allow nothing that could offend me to be inserted in the review of which he is manager, whether directly or indirectly.

That he give a quittance for all antecedent dealings, clearing all accounts up to September 1, 1833, between me and the 'Revue.'

That I am to be printed in the largest type.

Next, that I am to be paid two hundred francs per sheet without deduction for blanks.

On these terms, all being written and agreed, give him 'Les Orphelins.' [1]

Buloz will get a fine article written on the 'Scènes,' and on the fourth volume of 'Les Contes philosophiques.'

Next, as a favour, he must insert the enclosed piece of poetry sent me from Martinique, and written by one of my best friends, and he will say that he has it through me.

If the 'Revue de Paris' and the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' are friendly to me, I will do them good service, and I have learned in the provinces how great is the influence of my name.

I will let Buloz know from Aix through what channel he is to forward the proofs.

Answer me in detail on all these points.

I embrace you from my heart; and if I have forgotten anything, I will write to you from Lyons. I sat up all night finishing 'Le Maudit,' [2] an article

[1] Now entitled *La Grenadière.*

[2] This work never appeared.

for Buloz. I hope to send you, the 1st of October, by a private hand, the entire manuscript of 'La Bataille' and 'Les Chouans,' corrected for Mame. Between this and then I intend to remain quiet.

A good kiss to the well-beloved mother. Take care of yourself and drill Paradis for me.

Farewell.

If you do not come to terms with Buloz, keep the MS.: I will tell you later what to do with it.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Lyons: August 25, 1832.

My dear worshipped mother,—I arrived at Lyons this morning, and this evening I am off to take the waters.

The journey from Angoulême here is performed at the rate of one league an hour. We sleep on the road; consequently, I have been four days travelling; but what an admirable journey! and what a pity it would have been to hurry through it.

France has been on the point of losing a very great man in my person. I had chosen the *impériale* for my place. It so befel that at Thiers, in Puy de Dôme, my foot slipped on the top step, and the iron edge has made a little hole in the bone of my right leg. As I am obliged

to keep quite still, with my leg stretched out, I prefer being at Aix, where I shall be better cared for than among strangers. If this 'bobo'[1] will come to anything I know not, at present it is nothing; the wound closed on the road. I have only a swelled leg and a difficulty in walking. Do not be anxious; if it were serious, I would tell you, as my name is Honoré.

I will write to you about Pichot when I get to Aix. I have only had time to read over the ten sheets from Gosselin, correct them, and send them back by the diligence of the Messageries Notre Dame des Victoires. But within three days from this, the article for the 'Revue de Paris' will be on its way, and will reach you four days after receipt of this. Let Éverat or Pichot know.

You can keep 'Les Orphelins' for the 'Revue de Paris.' Buloz shall have nothing. You will receive further instructions with my packet of proofs, in which there will be a letter for you.

You did well to sell 'Smogler' and the cabriolet. Mind you put the money carefully by, with this label on it: 'Remount of horses and carriages.' This will make you laugh.

Have the tilbury laid up *in fiocchi*, and let it be well wrapped round, wheels and all.

[1] A nursery word for a hurt.

I have work finished for the next four months, so that, according to the contracts we are going to sign, there will be an income of two thousand francs for us; then 'La Bataille,' the new 'Contes drôlatiques,' and the four volumes for Mame will make a good deal of money, and that will not be all: so do not let us despair.

Intreat Crapelet's foreman to revise carefully the corrections for Gosselin; he will receive, directed to him, before ten days are over, the corrected copy he asks for. I left it at Saché, and I am writing to M. de Margonne to despatch it. The master of Saché is exact; therefore set Gosselin's mind at ease. But Gosselin has not sent me the first sheets of the 'Bons propos des Religieuses de Poissy,'[1] whereof I am in urgent need, as likewise of those numbers of 'L'Artiste' I have already asked you for.

Farewell, good mother, until to-morrow, when I will write you from Aix, but the letter will be inside the parcel of proofs for the 'Revue.'

A good kiss, mother.

'Lambert' is completely corrected. I am still pleased with it. M. Chambellant will turn pale at it, and so will all the Swedenborgians. The

[1] This tale forms part of the second *dizain* of the *Contes drôlatiques.*

parcel containing the proofs of 'Lambert' is addressed to you; go quickly to the diligence office for it.

If you have the tilbury new lined with cloth, let the colour be maroon.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Aix : Saturday, August 27, 1832.

My kind and excellent Mother,—After writing to you in such haste, I felt my inmost heart melt as I read your letter again, and I worshipped you. How shall I return you, when shall I return you, and can I ever return you, by my love and endeavours for your happiness, all that you have done for me? I can at present only express my deep thankfulness. This journey which you have enabled me to make was very necessary; I was in such absolute need of some relaxation. 'Louis Lambert' had left me overwhelmed with fatigue. I had sate up many nights, and taken coffee to such an excess that I had brought on pains in the stomach amounting almost to cramp. 'Louis Lambert' is perhaps a *chef-d'œuvre*, but it has cost me dearly; six weeks of unrelenting toil at Saché and ten days at Angoulême. This time I think *certain friends* of mine may perhaps begin to rate me as a man of some account.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the trouble you take to save me from the practical annoyances of life. My ever-increasing affection is not feeling which words express. Toil so obstinate may perhaps be crowned by fortune; I am the more encouraged to hope, as looking round, I see few talents unrewarded. As to fame, I am beginning not altogether to despair of that either.

My darling mother, how can I comfort you otherwise than as I comfort myself—with dreams! A young man came four leagues on purpose to see me when he heard I was at La Poudrerie, and the people of the Cercle Constitutionnel (Constitutional Club) have told me that, if I had a mind to be a Deputy, they would elect me, notwithstanding my aristocratic opinions.

'Is this genuine?' or did they mock me? I cannot tell, but it raises my hope. The point now, is to go on making further exertions, and not to let my courage fail.

I have been better for the last week, and have recovered those intervals of inspiration which had abandoned me since my fall. Coffee had ceased to produce any effect. I am now in a glorious vein; and I hope to do a great deal of work here, where I am so quiet.

I shall probably make a pedestrian tour in Switzerland, after I have published 'La Bataille' and 'Les Conversations.' Go then and see Gosselin, that he may hurry the printer. I am devoured with eagerness to publish the fourth volume of the 'Contes philosophiques.' Take care of your health, my mother; you must live, that I may acquit myself of my debt towards you. Oh! how I should embrace you if you were here! How deep is my gratitude towards the kind hearts who pluck some of the thorns from my life and smooth my path by their affection. But constrained to an unceasing warfare against destiny, I have not always leisure to give utterance to what I feel. I would not, however, allow a day to pass without letting you know the tenderness your late proofs of devotion excite in me. A mother suffers the pangs of labour more than once with her children, does she not, my mother? Poor mothers, are you ever enough beloved! When shall I be a genius, like Byron or Goethe? When shall I reach the tribune (of the Chamber of Deputies)? that I may then give you pleasure equal to the tortures I now inflict on you. I embrace and press you to my heart with joy; divine all that I have left unwritten.

To Madame de Balzac.

Aix : Saturday, Sept. 1, 1832.

My dear well-beloved Mother,—Do not be anxious about my leg ; two or three baths I took here have checked the suppuration, and a scar is forming, which I treat with respect. No further fear : two or three days more, and I shall walk.

The diligence conductors were all very attentive, and no further mischance occurred during the journey to aggravate the harm done. My leg was kept straight all the time.

Now let us proceed to business in due order.

I found Auguste Sannegou here, to whom I owe eleven hundred francs. This is the money that Madame Wilmen, the actress of the Vaudeville his mistress, came and asked me for, and I would not pay to her, because I did not know whether Auguste was still with her. Now, it seems my friend has lost a great deal of money at Aix, and knowing he was here I wrote to him to this effect : 'Will you have your money here or in Paris ? I did not give it to Adeline.' He was delighted to get it. Therefore, my darling, you must send me as soon as possible eleven hundred francs, which I will hand over to Sanne-

gou, and two hundred francs more, which I shall keep for myself, because I have only two hundred left, and I cannot have less than four hundred francs in my pocket in a foreign place, in case of any accident. Then I shall go to Geneva, to the Chartreuse, &c.

Have the inclosed letter conveyed to Adeline; she might get up tales about me at the Vaudeville, and this will shut her mouth. If she has left the Rue St.-Honoré, they will know her address at the Vaudeville. So that matter is settled.

Send me my money by the diligence of the Messageries Royales.

'Revue de Paris.' I have sent my proofs back to Éverat direct by the post; however bulky the packet, it will not cost more than by diligence, and one avoids the Custom-house. There is a letter inside for M. Pichot, which letter contains a rectification of the agreement you will sign with him. I am going to give you the clauses of it, and you will show them to Dumont or to Labois; for my head is so full of ideas that I may have omitted something. When the agreement is signed, you will hand over 'Les Orphelins' to M. Pichot. This will make the contribution for October; and perhaps I may send seven or eight pages more, besides 'Les Amours d'une

Laide,'[1] which will do for November, when I send the proofs of the 'Orphelins.'

And now you will impress on M. Pichot that the 'Revue' must allow me to take back without dispute 'Maître Cornelius,' which is in the fourth volume of the 'Contes philosophiques,' and my reckoning with the 'Revue' must be regarded as amply paid off by 'Madame Firmiani' and 'La Femme de Trente Ans'; I am not even sure if they are not, strictly speaking, in my debt some three hundred francs. When the agreement is signed, you will send the enclosed to Buloz, who may claim some money from you: if so, you will pay him what he asks, that is, upon a settlement of account.

'Contes philosophiques.'—When the fourth volume is published by Gosselin, send me two copies out here. Place them each in a wrapper, one directed to me, and the other to Madame la Duchesse de Castries; you will then send off both volumes in the same envelope to M. Lombard, banker, Geneva. My darling mother, be sure to send these directly there are any copies ready.

You will then ask for ten more copies; one for yourself, first of all, and the others to be

[1] This work was never published.

distributed, as follows, accompanied by small notes:

1. To Madame de Berny.
2. To Madame Delannoy.
3. To Madame Carraud (by coach).
4. To M. de Margonne (ditto).
5. To M. Nacquart.
6. To M. Émile de Girardin.
7. To Madame Sophie Gay.
8. To Madame d'Abrantès.
9. To Surville.

And request Gosselin to send one from me to Philarète Chasles, who has written the Preface, and one to M. Mame.

Lastly, one to M. Jules Sandeau (Quai St.-Michel 26), with an intimation that in my absence I have charged you to send it to him that he might present it to *the rightful claimant.* A pretty little room had been retained for me here, where I remain in solitude up to six in the evening; it costs me two francs a day. I have my meals sent in from a neighbouring restaurant: in the morning an egg and a cup of milk; this breakfast costs me fifteen sous; dinner to match.

Then at six I go downstairs to the apartment of the Duchess, and spend the evening there till eleven o'clock.

I work in this way twelve hours in the early part of the day. I have begun 'La Bataille,' and shall go on without stopping, so that I may be able to send you the manuscript from the 25th to the 30th of the month.

Madame de Castries is full of the most amiable attentions towards me. My only relaxation is my little *soirée* in her company. I have to work so hard, I cannot afford to see any one. When I have finished 'La Bataille,' I shall go to Geneva, and to the Grande Chartreuse.

You see my way of life is simple enough and not expensive. I carried away with me on June 5 one hundred and twenty francs; you sent me a hundred in the first instance, then three hundred more, and I borrowed a hundred and fifty of M. Carraud: total, six hundred and seventy francs for three months; and this includes coach fare, hotel expenses, and servants largely fee'd. What say you, mother?—though I am somewhat of a poet and a dreamer, you must own I am mighty economical.

My four hundred francs will carry me on till about mid-October, because I intend to make some excursions.

Farewell, my kind mother, I embrace you with all my heart, and go back to work. Yet I don't

know, perhaps I may take a rest to-day. I made all the corrections in 'La Femme abandonnée' in two days.

You see that I am doing what you wish for the 'Revue de Paris,' I will hold out my hand to M. Pichot, and will forget everything. I have made up my accounts: on February 15 you will have received the ten thousand francs. In my very next letter I will explain in what way. You tell me nothing about my lawsuits; are they lost? Mother, a kiss from the heart of your Honoré.

Keep Paradis, together with the cook; but break them into their work, polishing the floors, and, above all, doing up my room in superior fashion. This will be a long affair; but if he is honest, I wish to attach him to me.

Have you sold the cabriolet and the horse without harness? You tell me nothing of all this. Farewell, my kind mother!

I find that, as I have time and space, I can give you the account now.

	Francs
From September to February, six months of the 'Revue de Paris' . . .	3,000
'La Bataille'	2,000
A volume of 'Drôlatiques' . . .	2,000
The four new volumes for Mame . .	5,000
There you have	12,000

And I shall have, moreover, in hand 'Le

Marquis de Carabas'[1] and a volume of 'Contes philosophiques.' So, my good mother, as I intend doing all this during my travels, I shall come back to Paris straight and clear for the moment; and then we shall see. Keep carefully apart, not mixing it up with any other account, the money for the horse and cabriolet. Farewell once more, my darling mother; you may inform M. Dieulouard that shortly I shall send him the manuscript. The 'Revue de Paris' will announce the work. I press you in my arms, and kiss you on the lids of those dear eyes that watch and wake for my sake.

Make Gosselin send me the commencement of the 'Religieuses de Poissy.' I write these 'Contes drôlatiques' as a relief, and I have done three already; I am pleased with them.

Look well after everything at my place; send away whom you like, make any saving you deem possible.

To Madame Zalma Carraud, Angoulême.

Aix: September, 1832.

I have arrived at Aix, but not without accident. At Thiers I had a narrow escape. Climbing up to the *impériale* just as I had let go the leathern straps by which you hoist yourself up, the horses

[1] It never appeared.

started off at a gallop, and I fell; but in the act of falling, I seized hold of a strap again, and remained suspended. The blow I inflicted on the coach, by reason of those eight kilogrammes duly ascertained to be my weight, was a violent one, and the edge of one of the iron steps laid open my tibia. Trowsers, boot and *blouse*, all were cut through. I did not get my wound dressed till we reached Lyons; it is not healed yet, but the cicatrix formed, after taking four baths. I can walk; and, thanks to the care of the diligence conductors, who always made a bed for me on their *impériales*, I shall be well in a couple of days. I have already been able to get as far as the Lake of Bourget, in a carriage.

I am talking about myself in all simplicity. I have had a magnificent journey, with which I am well satisfied. The valleys of Limousin are still predominant in my memory, even after those of Auvergne. But the plain of the Limagne, contrasted with the valley of Boyat, is sublime. The weather was fine. I saw the country under every favourable condition. Then, too, by the greatest chance at Limoges, I fell in with a travelling companion, who turned out eminently gay and witty, and a good soul. It was a little bit of good luck. He comes from Limoges, and his name is Dejean.

I have come here to seek at once both much and little. Much because I see daily a person full of grace and amiability, little because she is never likely to love me. Why did you send me to Aix?

At Lyons, I subjected 'Lambert' to further correction. Like a bear, I licked my cub. I have made more cuts; and I have added something you have not seen, I mean the last thoughts of Lambert. On the whole, I am satisfied; it is a work instinct with profound melancholy, and with science. Indeed, I do deserve to have a mistress, and every day increases my sorrow at not possessing one, because love is my life, my being.

You see I am writing to you, notwithstanding your prohibition, but perhaps I shall see you again soon. 'La Bataille' is begun.[1]

M. Bergès must have received his book. If the 'Angoumoisins' will have me for a Deputy, I don't mind having them for my constituents.[2]

The post only goes out three times a week, from Aix. I have a small simply furnished room, from which I survey the entire valley. I rise remorselessly at five in the morning, and work, sitting at my window, till half-past five in the evening.

[1] This book, the full title of which was meant to be *La Bataille d'Austerlitz*, though so frequently mentioned, never appeared.

[2] This gentleman was to have been one of the supporters of his candidateship.

My breakfast is brought to me from the club; one egg. Madame de Castries has some good coffee made for me. At six we dine together, and I spend the evening in her company. She is the most refined type of womanhood: Madame de Beauséant improved upon; but are not all these lovely manners acquired at the cost of the soul within?

If Mademoiselle Marinettissima is still with you, kiss her on the neck for me, her champion. You will not fail to remember me to the high and mighty Lord Borget, nor to my lady. I bear so far a resemblance to Madame Raison, that I suffer from my tibia. This is self-flattery. Recall me to the recollection of that excellent Latinist, M. Raison. I shall say nothing of the good Commandant; there is always at the end of my letter a good grip of the hand for him. As for you, I leave you to guess at all that I do not insert; but you will allow me to kiss from afar your pretty hand, so soft, so smooth, and in the touch of which there is inspiration.

Do you then wish to bring me to confusion? Madame Nivet, of whom I had time to catch a glimpse, has spoken to me about the vases.

I will be revenged!

The Angoulême coach arrives at Limoges in

the morning at six, and the Lyons conveyance at ten. Your nephew showed me the city; and I breakfasted with your sister and her husband. Your sister is a great invalid; there is a fatal tint about her complexion. I can easily believe her health to be in a precarious state.

In my headlong way, I was nearly forgetting to tell you of this incident which to you must be doubly interesting.

Re-adieu! In my absence, you will receive my 'Lambert.' Had I been in Paris, I might have sent one to your neighbours; but it is not an easy matter. Moreover, I should have had to give them the four volumes, and my publisher gave me notice at Lyons of the approaching exhaustion of the edition. When the next appears, I shall have it more in my power to testify my acknowledgment of their gracious acts. You know all that is felt towards you here; but not quite all.

To Madame Laure Surville, at Paris.

Aix: September 15, 1832.

One line of remembrance to you, my dear sister. In the midst of my travels I have seen lovely places; perhaps I shall see some still more

beautiful; I wish you to know that they cannot make me forget you.

From my room I see the whole valley of Aix; in the horizon are hills, the high mountain of the Dent-du-Chat, and the delicious Lake du Bourget; but in the midst of all these enchantments one must do one's work. My mother will have told you, that I have to furnish forty pages a month to the 'Revue de Paris.'

Dear sister, here I am between thirty and forty years old, that is to say, in the prime of my strength; I ought now to write all my best things, which should form the crown of my labours. I shall see whether I can obtain on my return the tranquillity which is necessary before I dare attempt these great works.

No doubt my mother has told you, that I was nearly killed under the wheels of a diligence; I escaped with a lacerated leg, but baths and rest are curing it. I was able yesterday to drive to the lake.

I am at the gates of Italy, and I fear to give way to the temptation of passing through them. The journey would not be costly; I could make it with the Fitzjames family, who would be exceedingly agreeable; they are all perfect to me. I should travel in their carriage: and, all

expenses calculated, it would cost a thousand francs to go from Geneva to Rome. My fourth of the expense would thus be two hundred and fifty francs. At Rome I should want five hundred francs; then I should pass the winter at Naples; but, in order not to touch the receipts at Paris, and to leave them all for interest, I will write the 'Médecin de Campagne' for Mame, and this book will pay for all. I shall never again have such an opportunity. The Duke knows Italy, and will save me all loss of time; ignorant persons spend much time in going to see useless things. I shall work all the time. At Naples I should have the Embassy, and the couriers of M. Rothschild, whose acquaintance I have made here, and who would give me introductions to his brother; the proofs would go on as usual, and the work also.

Talk about this project with my mother, and write me full details about yourselves. A grasp of the hand to the ferocious republican.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Aix: Saturday, September 22, 1832.

My dear Mother,—The agreement with Ricourt [1] is only for one year, and the year will be

[1] Manager of *L'Artiste*.

out in three or four months, leaving it unfulfilled. Ricourt has not behaved well to me. I am quite willing to leave 'La Transaction' to its fate, and it will be easy to replace it by something else, until I regain my ownership of that production, for which at present I have not been paid. As to M. Dieulouard, pray send him the enclosed letter, without any word from yourself, and forward me his reply by the very next post. By the time he has answered, 'La Bataille' will be finished: but there is no mortal power which will get it out of my portfolio, unless M. Dieulouard pays the price for it in full; and no one in the world will persuade me to shrink from the action at law which it will be open to him to bring. I am furious at being thus tormented about a work so long, so laborious and so difficult, by a man like this, much more than I was by that rough bear Gosselin about 'La Peau de Chagrin.' Accordingly, I have made up my mind to the course I am communicating to you, and which I intend to follow out with that perseverance and firmness of will which you must by this time recognise in me. I will allow no one in the world to claim anything whatsoever from me. In Paris I should be lured away, my mind diverted; therefore, I shall not return till I have fulfilled all

my engagements of whatsoever nature they may be.

Early in October 'La Bataille,' will be finished; and, saving what M. Dieulouard may determine, this matter will be at an end.

There remains but little to be done to the second *dizain* of the 'Contes drôlatiques.' I shall then immediately set about 'Le Marquis de Carabas;' and whilst I am doing this, as there will be intervals in composing the work, I shall give Mame two volumes in octavo, and perhaps three, to keep him patient till he gets 'Les Trois Cardinaux;' then I shall give Gosselin a historical romance. So that, when I return to Paris, no publisher can ask me for anything, except Mame, for whom I shall write 'Les Trois Cardinaux,' but I must be in Paris for that. Thus the five hundred francs a month from the 'Revue,' and the money for the works I shall have written, will repay my loan and clear my travelling expenses, which I am reducing to the simplest form. If I am to remain away from Paris, I prefer Italy before all other places, my electioneering interests at Angoulême can very well be followed up by correspondence. I shall not be hampered with my proofs, and by returning the proof of 'Les Orphelins' corrected, the 'Revue' will have the

article for November ready corrected, also the manuscript for December; thus I shall be well beforehand.

In order to give Mame all my works, I should have to break off with Gosselin, and Gosselin little knows what he will lose, if he should behave badly to me. The future edition of the 'Contes philosophiques' is neither given nor promised to him. He is entitled only to one edition of the 'Marquis de Carabas' and to one edition of the historical romance, and I shall stipulate that the first editions are to be of one thousand only; so that, at the end of the year, I shall re-enter into possession of every one of mine that he has published. And Mame will inherit all. As a matter of course, before my departure I shall send him the copy for the 'Chouans'; he will have it in time for October 15, and it can be printed quickly, as there will be no need of proofs. I hope before the middle of 1833 to be able to let him have an entire edition to bring out, and he certainly shall lose nothing by having waited.

By that time my article in the 'Revue' will have increased my reputation, and I shall refresh the 'Scènes de la Vie privée,' as well as the 'Contes philosophiques,' with some additions.

Then the 'Trois Cardinaux' will appear. I shall thus have a goodly array of works.

I have a piece of bad news to communicate. Yesterday the wound in my leg re-opened, it is enlarged and I have had to consult the official doctor of the springs. He told me there was no danger; but he ordered me fifteen days of absolute rest, and he is going to set about closing the wound; he fears, however, the bone may have been injured, and that splinters will have to be expelled. In three days he will know whether the bone has been depressed; I shall be able to give you news of this cursed wound by the next post. He certainly declared there was nothing to fear; but meanwhile it has lasted a month already, and prevented me from stirring. It is true I committed an imprudence in climbing up the Mount du Chat.

I have worked a great deal, especially in plans for books during the last week.

Farewell, my good, well-beloved mother! I embrace you with all my soul. Oh! if you but knew how I yearn at this moment to throw myself upon your bosom, as into an asylum of undivided affection, you would put a few loving words into your letters, for the one I am now answering contains not even one poor kiss. There is

nothing in it, except ——. Ah! mother, mother, this is cruel.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Aix: Sunday, September 23, 1832.

My dear mother, my well-beloved mother.—My journey to Italy is decided upon. You will ask me how I am going to travel. Then, I must tell you, little mother, that I only gave Sannegou six hundred francs; he does not mind my putting off till the next time we meet paying the five hundred francs which remain; he is a man with a soul above this wretched trifle of a debt or the postponement of it. I was the first to proclaim my debt, he cannot say that I ran away from it.

Calculating everything fairly, this money will take me to Rome. I travel as fourth passenger in Madame de Castries' *vetturino*; and the bargain—which includes everything, food, carriages, hotels—is a thousand francs for all of us to go from Geneva to Rome; making my share two hundred and fifty francs.

In Rome I shall want five hundred francs and the same in Naples. *I do not ask you for them.* By working for three days and three nights successively, I have written a volume in 18mo. entitled 'Le Médecin de Campagne.' A traveller is

taking it to Mame. As there are only 200 pages in 18mo., he can get it all set up in type, and I can give the order to go to press before my departure for Italy, which will not be before October 10. He will remit me five hundred francs to Rome, and five hundred to Naples. I shall give him my instructions.

I shall only have to ask you towards the month of March for five hundred francs, with which to come back from Naples; and it is even possible I may earn this by some sort of work by that time. There is another matter. If there should be a general election, the Royalists will stand for the colleges, this is now decided. In that case M. le Duc de Fitzjames will, in all likelihood, be elected in at least two districts. If I am not elected at Angoulême, M. de Fitzjames will use his interest to get me elected for the place he declines.

I shall make this splendid journey with the Duke, who will treat me as if I were his son. I also shall be in relation with the best society; I am not likely to meet with such an opportunity again. M. de Fitzjames has been in Italy before, he knows the country, and will spare me all loss of time. Besides this, his name will throw open many doors to me. The Duchess and he are

both more than kind to me, in every way, and the advantages of their society are great.

My expenses during the journey will not much exceed what they would be in Paris; so that, my darling mother, I shall have had a splendid journey, I shall have seen Italy, and the works of art, the fêtes, the theatres, kept my work well going on, and no interest will have suffered by it. The necessary intervals of repose will be taken on the road, and at each place of sojourn I shall work for ten days. Farewell, the courier is impatient, and I have yet to write to Madame Delannoy and to Madame Carraud about what should be done in case of my election.

My leg is dressed with some of your mother's ointment, and I am in less pain. I am waiting till to-morrow to see if any splinters appear, and will write to you the day after, which is post day. A thousand kisses and tender thoughts.

To Madame Zulma Carraud.

Aix: September 23, 1832.

Thanks from the bottom of my heart for your letter, so friendly and so affectionate, in spite of all your scoldings. I am writing to you, leaving my work for your sake *with pleasure.* On October 10, I shall set out for Italy, a temptation beyond

my power to resist. Have no fears, 'La Bataille' will come out, and something better than 'La Bataille,' a book after your own heart, 'Le Médecin de Campagne.'

Reassure yourself about the 'Revue de Paris.' The editor and the paper have done all I could humanly expect. They will repair all; they make me a fixed allowance of five hundred francs for one article a month.

I am much pleased with you, because you tell me all you think, though I cannot agree with your observations about my political character, about the man of power. My opinions are formed, my convictions are made at an age when a man is able to judge of his country, of her laws, and her manners. I have not joined my party blindly; I have been influenced by no personal consideration, this I can swear to you, to whom I would never say what is false, for with you I speak as from heart to heart. Thus I may not, I cannot, alter my political character, nor my opinions. My plan of government, my ideas are sound and just, at least I believe so. They are much more compatible with yours than you think. Only I take what I consider a surer road to arrive at a good result. You only see a portion of the existing interests,

things, persons, manners. I believe I see all, and combine all for a prosperous political power. I will never sell myself. I shall always be true to my professions, noble and generous in my actions. The abolition of all nobility outside the Chamber of Peers; the separation of the clergy from Rome; the natural frontiers of France; perfect equality in the middle classes; the recognition of all genuine superiority; economy in the public expenditure; augmentation of the revenues, through a better knowledge of the principles of taxation; education for all: these are the principal points of my political creed, to which you will find me faithful. Between my words and my deeds there will always be coherence.

As to the means, I am the best judge of them. I submit to every form of calumny; I am prepared for everything, because a day will come when I shall find voices to support me. I desire public authority to be strong. You may not approve or you may not understand my ideas, my means of action; but you will always esteem and love me, because I know that I am not to be corrupted by money, nor by woman, nor by a decoration, nor by power, because I want it to be thorough. I see always my whole life before me, and I rate my own self-respect higher than all other things.

This said, do not seek to haggle with me further over my opinions. The general plan of them is fixed. As to the details of my life, or any ameliorations in the methods of execution, your friendship will always have a sovereign voice, respectfully listened to and with delight. I speak to you as from heart to heart, because I know you will respect the secret of my political ideas; they are of a kind to expose me to the hatred of my party, were they known. But it would be impossible to insure the triumph of these ideas without the co-operation, without the conviction, of the numbers. I do not deceive my party. I believe that its existence is bound up in the recognition, without any *arrière-pensée*, of the things required by the nature of the ideas of the present time. I may tell you that if M. Bergès has not been misled by the friendship he expressed for me, in the event of an election, I shall present myself at Angoulême; and I would even return to La Poudrerie from whatever part of Italy I might be in, were I told by you that I have any chance of success. I shall have the support of the two papers belonging to my party, who have at last come to an agreement to return Royalists to the next elections. I shall address either to you or to M. Bergès the different political writings I may draw up for the arrondissement. Will you

recommend my little work in 18mo.—'Le Médicin de Campagne.' It will gain me friends. It is a piece of writing calculated to do good, and worthy to compete for the Monthyon prize.

Pardon me, dear, for my pleasantries about the money for my writings; they shocked you, but they were mere childishness, like many things I say and do. Do you think that money could repay me for my toil, my health? No—no! I set above all else the pleasure of causing a heart like yours to beat with a quicker pulse; and though my imagination as an artist may sometimes carry me away, be assured that I always return with love for what is beautiful and true.

You were both wrong and right to send me here; wrong, because I was perfectly happy with you; right, because travelling enlarges one's ideas. I say to myself, that a life like mine ought not to be dependent on the society of any woman; that I ought to follow my destiny in a large broad way, and look a little higher than a woman's girdle. Whatever you may say, I shall ever be faithful to the friendly hands that have welcomed me to La Poudrerie, although I may have compared them to the satin softness of Chinese paper. If M. Carraud loves me ever so little, he will store up for my benefit his ideas on certain improvements,

and I will proclaim them to the world by embodying them in my system. If you are still well disposed towards me, you will spare me neither counsels, nor scoldings, nor reproaches. From you all is taken in good kind. You would love me much more than you do, did you know how much I think of you, in all matters. I went to La Grande Chartreuse, and several of my exclamations were addressed to you. From Italy you will receive every month the tribute of my remembrances. In Italy—if I go there! for I hardly yet believe in my journey—give me often a place in your thoughts, as I give you in mine. Your pure and disinterested affection is one of my greatest consolations.

The brilliant and happy day you wish for me dawns not yet, and I am still a prey to the same griefs; and they are at times very poignant. Excessive labour alone enables me to bear them. For a month past the wound in my leg has been again open; nor does it look as though it meant soon to close. The doctor at the springs believes that the bone is injured, slightly depressed on the ridge of the tibia, and that certain small splinters must be thrown out. It will take a fortnight more to heal; but he assures me there is no danger. I am pinned down here till October 6. Therefore,

if you have anything to write to me, you can send your letter from Angoulême up to the 1st, reckoning six days for delivery.

You were mistaken in imagining I wished to write for twenty minds only. I was speaking of *certain* things, and not of everything.

Horses, carriages (the tilbury excepted), all have been sold, and the servants discharged. My expenses in Paris are limited now to my rent, interest on money amounting to eighty-nine francs a quarter, and a cook for my mother.

You see, I shall not spend more than three hundred francs a month. I am going to capitalise, to pay off the loan raised by my mother. There is prudence!

How completely you misjudge me in believing that I should not be able to give myself entirely to the affection which you describe as manly, and in condemning me to the society of the woman whom you imagine to be here, and whom you describe after your own fancy! You have been unjust in many of the things you have imagined about me. I, sold to a party for the sake of any woman!—you cannot believe it of me.

I look upon all pleasure as degrading, and as tainted that does not rise from and return to the heart! Oh! you owe me many amends! I have

not had the thoughts you credit me with. I have a horror of all that trenches on seduction, because it is contrary to all that is pure and true in sentiment. Out of the works of my imagination you have created monsters. One has to accept the disadvantages of a faculty along with its advantages. I entreat you to endeavour to understand me better.

You place much more importance than I do on the frivolous pleasure of driving rapidly to the Bois. This is a mere *fantaisie d'artiste*, a childish whim. My rooms are a pleasure to me, a necessity, like that of having clean linen or of bathing. I have acquired the right to have silk hangings, because to-morrow, if need were, I could return without a regret to the artist's garret, the empty garret, rather than give my countenance to anything to be ashamed of, rather than sell myself at any price. Oh, do not calumniate a soul who loves you, and who thinks of you in his moments of heaviness! Do you believe that I would quit *the world of ideas*, and give up the chance of becoming a man of a European fame, for the *political* world, if I did not feel that I could do something that is great, that I could serve my country?

Do believe that I am not destitute of common sense.

Do not forget any one, in conveying my remembrances; not even M. Larreguy, if you see him; and make the speeches I ought to make to neighbours and to everybody, not forgetting M. Bergès, my electoral guide.

A thousand kind things and a grip of the hand to M. Carraud. The 'Voyage à Java' will appear in November; M. Grand-Besançon will receive the number of the 'Revue,' in which it will appear. Find here all that is yours within my soul, and all that is good in

Your HONORÉ.

To Madame de Balzac at Paris.

Aix: September 30, (midday).

I have your last letter of the 25th, and I can answer it before the courier leaves—I have only a moment.

I beg of you, my dear mother, in the name of my heavy work, never to write to me that such a work is good, and such another bad; you upset me for a fortnight.

You have not taken in good part something I said to you; you do not understand my heart and affection.

I am more disturbed by this than by anything

else! When will you repose quietly on the hearts of your children?

. . . . . .

I cannot send you any power of attorney: in the first place, there are no French stamps for it to be had in Savoy; next, you do not send me a draught of the form. Have the case adjourned, if you cannot settle it otherwise, and send me a form by return of post, *poste restante* Geneva. I can go and write the power at Ferney, which is in France, and quite close to Geneva.

Gosselin's letter was of the highest importance, and I am very vexed at having no news from Mame, to whom I am writing by this post (this letter-writing kills me!) Gosselin has no more copies left of the 'Contes philosophiques,' and very soon you will receive from him, when the bargain is concluded, in accordance with the replies I am expecting, two thousand seven hundred francs in cash, I hope.

So that my account will be proved correct. Without reference to the third edition of the 'Scènes,' which is impending, there will still be:

	FRANCS.
Six months certain of the 'Revue' . .	3,000
Third edition of the 'Romans et Contes philosophiques'	2,700
Second *dizain* (1500 copies, 1 fr. 50 c.) .	2,200
'La Bataille'	1,800
Total	9,700

I shall therefore soon be ahead of my affairs!

You will receive instructions about the method in which you are to receive Barbier's three thousand francs, for the reprints of the 'Contes,' of 'Les Chouans,' of 'La Bataille,' and of the 'Médecin,' for which I shall stipulate with him.

A thousand tender caresses and a kiss.

Don't forget anything I have charged you with in my letters.

From Geneva to Genoa, from Genoa to Naples, from Naples to Rome; but I shall write to you when I send the 'Médecin de Campagne.'

To M. Mame, Bookseller and Editor, Paris.

Aix: September 30, Sunday, 1832.

My dear Monsieur Mame,—I have just received a letter from your nephew-in-law, regarding a third edition of my 'Romans et Contes philosophiques,' of which the fourth volume is about to appear. In pursuance of my present intention, to which I am resolved to adhere, of giving you the publication of all my works, I will not reply without consulting you.

Gosselin informs me he has only one hundred and fifty copies left of the three first volumes; and,

like a cunning publisher, he wants to make sure of a contract for a third edition of six hundred before he knows whether he is to keep them at twenty-two francs fifty centimes in case of refusal, or to give them up with the usual discount, if he makes a new contract, for he foresees that when the sale of the fourth volume commences they will be all cleared off.

He offers me two thousand francs in bills, whereas I want one franc fifty centimes on the three volumes, which would make two thousand seven hundred francs in cash. No doubt we shall come to terms. But if I refuse, he will keep not only the one franc fifty centimes on the three volumes, but the seventeen hundred and fifty copies of the fourth volume.

Then I owe him, in all fairness, 'Le Marquis de Carabas' and a romance (a first edition, the number of which is not yet fixed). I should be disposed, therefore, to let him have this first impression, which would not exceed in the number of copies of the first edition of the 'Marquis de Carabas,' and let him sell the whole.

I shall only bring you these six volumes in 8vo. when completed, supplemented by two new volumes of the 'Contes philosophiques,' which will make up eight volumes, and this will be for

the winter of 1833–1834, to the best of my calculations.

I requested your nephew to answer me an important question before I gave him my answer. Therefore, write to me by return of post, and direct your letter to Geneva *poste restante.* This important question is to enquire how many copies remain of a third edition of the 'Contes philosophiques' in two volumes 8vo., without counting 'La Peau de Chagrin,' which was printed for the publishers who had the first edition of 'La Peau.' I think my reasons are good and for our mutual interest, and I do not think these small editions will injure the complete one I wish to prepare.

This subject is now exhausted; let us pass to another.

My mother will soon receive, if she have not already received, *a manuscript work complete!* by me, entitled 'Le Médecin de Campagne,' which is intended for you. Now mark, with twofold attention, Master Mame! I have long been struck with the popularity which consists in selling many thousands of cheap copies in one small volume in 18mo. of works like 'Atala,' 'Paul and Virginia,' 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' 'Manon Lescaut,' 'Perrault,' &c., &c., and I desire the same for myself. The numbers sold make up for there

being only one volume; but the book must be one that may be put in the hands of *all*—the young maiden, the child, the old man, and even of the devout female. Then, by the time the book has become known, which may be long or short, according to the talent of the author, and that of the publisher, such a book becomes an important property, as, for example, 'Les Méditations,' by Lamartine, the sale of which amounted to sixty thousand copies; Volney's 'Ruines,' &c.

My book, then, is a work conceived in this spirit, a work which the portress of a convent and the great lady may read alike. I have taken the New Testament and the Catechism, two books of excellent teaching, and I have founded mine upon them. I have placed the scene in a village; —however, you will read it *all at once*—a very rare thing with me. There are three reasons why I do not put my name to it: the first is, that I cannot conscientiously do so; and I am, and will remain, in spite of all calumnies to the contrary, a man of honour always. I have entered into an engagement with Gosselin; the second reason is, that the fourth volume of the 'Contes' is about to appear, that 'La Bataille' will appear likewise, and I do not wish to have three publications going on at the same time, to say nothing of

'Les Chouans'; the third is, that I shall put my name to it when the book has made its mark and has come to the second edition. However, I have no objection to your letting it be quietly understood that it is mine. You may let the newspapers assert the fact; and, moreover, I have affixed an epigraph signed by my name.

Now I want *one franc* on each copy, and I will allow you an edition of thirteen hundred. Put the book at as low a price as possible. The reason why I want a thousand francs, is that I am going off to Italy, and I want to earn the expenses of my journey. If this proposal pleases you, when you have read the book, have it printed by Barbier (Rue des Marais), who has a mechanical press, and I wish I could regain my interest in the same![1] Now this edition, that of the 'Chouans,' and that of the three volumes of the 'Contes philosophiques,' that of 'La Bataille,' &c., will repay my travelling expenses. The volume will contain from two hundred and sixteen to two hundred and twenty pages, that is from six to seven sheets in 18mo. with no other embellishment than good paper and clear type. Now it must be printed in *pica*. Barbier is sure to have six sheets of *pica*; he can set up the whole

[1] Barbier was the purchaser of Balzac's printing establishment.

in a couple of days, and you can send me the entire work set up in 'slips' by the diligence to Ferney, *bureau restant*, so that all may be finished with as little delay as possible. I shall be at Geneva until October 15; and I will then send you back your volume two days after it comes to hand, with the order to go to press, and I will not touch it again. If this affair succeeds—and it will succeed, because I can give you the means of commanding a sale by getting you the support of the 'Journal des Connaissances Utiles,' belonging to my friend Girardin, who issues as many as a hundred thousand copies, and my book being exactly within the scope of his periodical—he will do us this good service; if, therefore, we obtain the success I look for, we should still keep to the one franc for me, and my mother will be empowered to authorise the printing of the several editions. Supported by the notices and advertisements in Émile de Girardin's paper, and by advertising in some of the other papers, this will be a good undertaking for both of us. But before you can see this as clearly as I do, you must read the book. *If you can clearly prove to me that one franc a volume is too much* (*which I do not think it is*), *we would make it seventy-five centimes; but you must let me have* A THOUSAND FRANCS, *and*

pay them in to M. de Rothschild, who will give you a letter of credit for me drawn on his house at Naples: I will tell you when I send back the proofs of the volume, where to address your letters, and you can repay yourself by printing more copies.

You see that I am not ungrateful for your readiness to serve me, and more especially for your not harassing me about the 'Chouans,' which you will receive corrected, along with the return of the proofs of the 'Médecin.'

I am working night and day, and I do not wish to be annoyed either by Gosselin or Boulland. Consequently, I shall not return to Paris till I am quit of my liabilities, that I may be a slave to nobody.

Nevertheless, you, Mame, shall have your three volumes in 8vo. shortly; two, entitled 'Études de Femmes,' the third 'Conversations entre Onze Heures et Minuit.' And in the first place, before all things, let me inform you that, in case of a third edition of the 'Scènes,' I shall suppress 'Le Conseil,' also 'Le Devoir d'une Femme,' in the third volume, and fill their places with a new 'scène,' which will appear in the 'Revue de Paris,' and will be more suitable to the nature of the 'Scènes de la Vie privée,'

than 'Le Conseil' and 'Le Devoir d'une Femme,' which I consider not quite consonant with the moral intention of that work.

So advise me well before hand when this second edition will come out; as if there were a necessity, I would not send the new 'scène' to the 'Revue de Paris,' but would let you have it at once.

Lastly, as we are to reprint the 'Romans et Contes,' I shall withdraw from that work 'Études de Femmes,' and 'Sarrazine,' which I do not regard as *philosophical*, and will replace them by a new tale, which I have quite ready. In that case the 'Études de Femmes' would be completed; to which I should give a new title: 'Sarrazine,' the two tales in 'Le Conseil,' 'the Message,' 'La Grande Brétèche, 'Le Devoir d'une Femme,' 'La Transaction,' all thoroughly re-written and corrected, and several other things, which you will read in the 'Revue,' such as 'La Femme abandonnée,' and other articles, which I shall keep back, in order to have some unpublished work on hand.

As soon as the fourth volume of my 'Contes philosophiques' shall be exhausted, I shall withdraw 'Madame Firmiani,' three sheets, there will be nothing to put in its place, twenty-four sheets

being quite enough. Thus, then, 'Le Médecin de Campagne,' 'Les Chouans,' 'Les Études de Femmes,' 'Les Conversations entre Onze Heures et Minuit,' and the third edition of the 'Scènes' will enable you to wait patiently for the 'Physiologie du Mariage,' (about which I am still at law), to include with my other works; your 'Trois Cardinaux,' the second edition of 'La Bataille,' and the eight volumes of the 'Contes philosophiques.'

You see that I do not lose sight of you. But my manuscript is the best proof of that. It will be a profitable affair for us both.

* * * I have not yet received your answer to the letter I lately wrote to you.

Important notice: The 'Gazette' and the 'Quotidienne' are the only newspapers admitted here, into Russia, and into Italy, &c. Always advertise in them.

A thousand compliments. Remember me to Madame Mame and to Mademoiselle Clémentine. And let us live in the hope of publishing a fine edition of my works in twenty-four volumes, when I have made my reputation in the Chamber of Deputies.

A thousand friendly things.

My election is a settled thing among the

leaders of the Royalist party, in the event of a general election.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Annecy : October 9, 1832.

My dear loved Mother,—You will find enclosed the MS. of 'Une Lettre à Nodier,' which is intended as an article for the 'Revue de Paris.'

You will beg M. Pichot to come and see you, and you will give him twenty-four hours in which to read this article and make up his mind if he will insert it exactly as it is in the 'Revue;' I hope he may accept it, because it would make a variety in our articles. As the letter is very complimentary to Nodier and to the 'Revue,' I have no doubt Pichot will accept it: in which case *I shall not require any proofs*; only you must get them to compare it with the original, and then withdraw the manuscript. In this case, the Letter should be published immediately and before 'Les Orphelins,' which M. Pichot could keep till the month of November.

You will receive by a lady who is starting for Paris, the complete MS. of 'Le Médecin de Campagne,' with instructions for Mame, and in a short time (I am only waiting for my books from Saché, and for the one I asked you to send me),

to finish the second *dizain* of the 'Contes drôlatiques' for Gosselin.

As to 'La Bataille,' I am waiting for M. Dieulouard's answer, who little knows what it is to write a book, and then the 'Revue' will be provided for until December, because I shall send, with the corrected proof of the 'Orphelins,' an article for November, all corrected, along with the manuscript for December.

The articles for January and February are each of them half planned and written; there remains little to be done.

I hope, my much loved mother, you will not let yourself grow dejected. I work as hard as it is possible for a man to work; a day is only twelve hours long, I can do no more.

I will send another article to the 'Rénovateur'; for, at the next assembling of the Chamber, I intend to be a Deputy. Farewell, my darling mother; I am very tired! Coffee hurts my stomach. For the last twenty days I have taken no rest; and yet I must still work on, that I may remove your anxieties. A good kiss full of tender affection.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Geneva : October 16, 1832.

My dear Mother,—Your son would like it to be understood by his mother, that whatever she may ask is granted beforehand, and that he would be happy if he could guess her desires. I don't know what you mean by your goat, but have as many goats as you please.

You must appeal in the action on the 'Physiologie,' if the copies have not been withdrawn from circulation, and you must ascertain the fact.

As a favour, and in the name of fair dealing, send me the beginning of the 'Bons Propos des Religieuses de Poissy,' which Gosselin is detaining; I must have it *by return of post.* My second *dizain* is more than half finished. Mame will have two good octavo volumes, which will please him; and 'La Bataille' will soon be ready. I have worked like a demon, for I am anxious to pay everybody before six months are over. I should much like to know if Mame is pressed for the 'Chouans.'

Reckoning everything, I ought to have a thousand francs to go to Italy. Unless something unforeseen occurs, I shall return into Touraine by a charming route at the end of October. It is

there that I intend to correct the proofs of 'La Bataille.' You must get me, from Merlin, or some other old bookseller, the works of Tabourot, seigneur des Accords, and send them to me with urgent speed. There are several titles by which the work is known. Merlin will tell you them, or better still, you will find them mentioned in the 'Biographie Universelle,' under the article TABOUROT. I must positively have them. I think the principal work is 'Les Coq à l'âne,' 'Les Touches,' 'Les Contre-petteries du Seigneur des Accords;' I do not well remember. And now, my dear beloved mother, you will find enclosed in this letter two pieces of flannel, which I have worn over my stomach, and which you must take to M. Chapelain. Begin by having the piece marked No. 1 submitted to examination. Let the question be asked, where is the seat of the disease? and what is the course of treatment to be followed. Have the reason of everything explained, the why and the wherefore of everything, and everything stated in full detail. Next for No. 2, ask the reason why the blister was ordered in the preceding consultation, and post the answer on the same day you have the consultation, and consult as soon as you receive my letter. Take care to carry the

flannels wrapt in paper, that the emanations may not be affected.

Answer me as to all I have asked concerning Pichot and the 'Revue,' point by point. Let them send to me here the number of the reviews in which my articles have appeared, independently of the numbers I received in Paris for my collection. Entreat Éverat, the printer, to give me a 'Déburau,'[1] and add it to my parcel. He will know what this means.

Has Laura forgotten me?

Farewell, for I have delayed writing up to the last moment for the post on account of the pieces of flannel. We only get our letters on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday, which occasions delay. I embrace you from my heart with an outpouring of tenderness.

I forgot to say, seal up the 'consultations,' and address them, writing outside the envelope, 'To Madame de Castries.' Write the address yourself, but have the letter sealed by M. Chapelain.

[1] An article by Jules Janin, on the celebrated pantomimist of that name.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Geneva : October, 1832.

My very dear Mother,—It is advisable I should return to France for three months. In spite of the kindness of the Rothschilds and the Embassies, it would be impossible from so great a distance to print the 'Médecin de Campagne,' 'La Bataille,' the Second Part of the 'Contes drôlatiques,' and the 'Etudes de Femmes.' The third edition of the 'SCÈNES DE LA VIE PRIVÉE' is exhausted ; I wish to profit by this to cut out two scenes, and to add a new one more moral than those I shall omit.

I have also an alteration of the 'Contes philosophiques' in view for the fourth edition, which I shall do sometime in April.

Then, I must think about the articles for the 'Revue,' and leave them all ready on my departure. Besides, my travelling companions will not be at Naples till February.

I shall, therefore, come back, but not to Paris: my return will not be known to anyone ; and I shall start again for Naples in February, *viâ* Marseilles and the steamer.

I shall be more at rest on the subjects of money and my literary obligations. I shall have

money enough to pay all, and nobody will have a claim upon me for a line.

I have sent the thousand francs to Naples, less a hundred which I wanted.

I shall settle this with Mame, to whom I am bringing a fine work—at least I hope so.

I do not know yet where I shall go; but do not speak of my return to anyone, except to Laura and to Surville.

I am greatly annoyed with M. Laurentie, but much pleased with Pichot about the 'Lettre à Nodier.' 'Les Orphelins' is at the printers, and there will be a prosperous month of November.

Pay nothing further to the tailor. Let the money from the 'Revue de Paris' accumulate for a capital. I start this evening, but I am not sure where I shall go, for I break my journey at Dijon, where I shall sleep. Adieu! good mother, a thousand loving things.

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Nemours: November 5, 1832.

My very dear Mother,—Keep your house; I had already sent an answer to Laura, I will not let either you or Surville bear the burden of my affairs.

However, until the arrival of my proxy, it is understood that Laura, who is my cash keeper, will remit you a hundred and fifty francs a month. You may reckon on this as a regular payment; nothing in the world will take precedence of it. Then, at the end of November, to December 10 you will have the surplus of the thirty-six thousand francs to reimburse you for the excess of the expenditure over the receipts during the time of your stewardship; during which, thanks to your devotion, you gave me all the tranquillity that was possible.

Laura tells me you can find a tenant for your house, at two thousand five hundred francs, it would not be a bad plan to make him pay the contributions.

I thank you heartily, dear mother, for all you wish to do for me; if I was less overwhelmed with work, I could say more, but time will be my advocate.

Adieu, I embrace you with all my soul, and I desire that you may arrange a peaceful and quiet life for yourself; for my part, I do not wish in the future to cause you annoyances or cares of any kind.

Make out the account soon, so that what is a business affair, may be settled without delay.

As to personal troubles, I shall scarcely give you any, if you will not doubt my heart, for I shall be a long time absent.

A thousand kind things.

Has not a china vase come for me?

Paris: the end of 1832.

Oh! my dear mother. I shed tears of joy over your letter! Yes, certainly; everything you desire! I have never felt so happy. My God, I did not expect the happiness of being able to afford you a few happy moments on my own account!

This evening, between five and six, I shall be with you—and we will dine together—not to-day, but on Saturday. A thousand tender caresses, my beloved mother. I want you to find my kiss written here when you arrive.

Your devoted Son,

HONORÉ.

In less than seven or eight months from this time, I will make you so happy that you shall feel quite well!

To M. Charles Gosselin, Publisher, Paris.

Paris : 1833

I participate, sir, in the pleasure you must feel at the happy accouchement of Madame Gosselin, and I am sorry for the annoyances 'Louis Lambert' has caused you. I do not reply to your last observations, because it would be interminable. And if I feel acutely the things that wound me, I can also sometimes forget them.

I have the honour to inform you, in order that there may not be a double delivery, that I am sending out of the hundred and twenty-five copies of the mechanical paper—a copy to each of the following persons :

MM. Nisard, Béquet, Amédée Pichot, Mévil Ballanche, Phillippon, De Briant, A. Berthier, Cazalès, Charles Nodier, Coste, O'Reilly (of the 'Temps'), Mame, Chasles, Rabou. I shall also send to all the provincial newspapers.

I undertake to bear the expense of this, according to your request; and I beg that you will not forget the advertisements in 'La Quotidienne' and the 'Gazette.'

As to the letter you expected from M. Surville, I am astonished that it has not yet reached you;

for I sent a satisfactory reply to M. Surville about your propositions. But I know he is much occupied.

Pray present my congratulations to Madame Gosselin, and accept yourself the assurance of my highest consideration.

Madame de Balzac, my mother, has no copy of Volume IV. of the 'Romans et Contes philosophiques,' will you send me one, placing it to my account?

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Angoulême.

Paris: Jan. 25, 1833.

'Juana'[1] has made me ill, you will have read it ere this. The illness was simply that I had to wait for the frame of mind in which I felt it possible to write this story. It has produced a great effect. I wrote it, as I wrote 'La Grénadière,' in a single night.

Sorrows of all kinds are taking their usual course, binding themselves tightly into my life by a thousand ligaments.

Borget[2] is now, as you know, in the Rue Cassini. I thank you much for having given me so good a friend. He has a soul which is

[1] Juana, the first title of part of *Marana*.

[2] Borget and Balzac shared at this time the same lodgings.

like that of a brother to my own, full of those delicacies of feeling which I adore, and I hope I may be for him all that he is for me. I cannot leave here till after February 15; but if you could hasten your departure by a few days, and if I were to delay mine, I might join you at Frapesle. I have the greatest desire to see the Cathedral of Bourges.

Thanks for your kind letter. You are quite right on all points in your opinion of 'Faust;' but there is poetry in it which you have not perceived, and about which we will talk some day: afterwards you shall read the work again, and under the influence of another thought, you will see it all in another aspect. As to 'Lambert,' you will before long receive a small parcel through M. Sazerac, which will contain my offering. A copy is in existence for you, printed on Chinese paper, and at this moment the best artists in book-binding are employed in rendering this copy worthy of you. I entreat you never to lend it to anyone.

You know that when you work in tapestry, each stitch is a thought. Well, each line in this new work has been for me an abyss. It contains things that are secrets between it and me. . . . Take great care of it, I will send you a common copy, which you can lend, that is if you should

feel disposed to lend it to others. The work is now much more complete than it was, more filled in, the style is better, may it one day become a monument to me! Some days hence, you will receive the second *dizain* of the 'Drôlatiques,' then 'Le Médecin de Campagne,' two works which, added to 'L'historie Intellectuelle de Louis Lambert,' ought to raise me out of my pagehood (*me mettre hors de page*).

M. Naquart fears some mischief is setting up in my brain, from so much bitter hard work. At the end of February my connection with the 'Revue' will cease; after that I shall not write for any journal, except for enormous pay, because it is this newspaper writing which knocks me down. I once thought of addressing a letter to you, and inserting it in 'Louis Lambert' as *l'envoi*, but it seemed to me not worth while. This copy will be better with the hidden grace of its secret. Your soft hands will enjoy turning over the leaves of this book; may its contents be equally pleasing to your soul! Adieu! then. You will write me a line,—am I to come to Angoulême? am I to come to Frapesle? and say for me a thousand friendly things to the Commandant, whatever you think proper to your neighbours, and a remembrance to my lovely sweetheart; as for yourself, you

know best whether I can write anything worthy of the millionth part of the good gentle thoughts you inspire.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, at Frapesle.

Paris : Saturday, May 26, 1833.

Madame,—I am divided whether to thank you, or—to scold you ; I will do both in the same breath.

I have received the carpet, it gives a royal aspect to my study : to me, who know the giver, how priceless is that carpet! Also I have received the tea service. It is graceful and lovely, and can be admired by all because it can be seen by all: though I would prefer that it should be seen by myself alone.

We are both fortunate, you and I. You to have given me an object which I am glad to possess, and I am fortunate to receive it at your hands.

I must tell you I am buried under a mountain of work. My life alternates mechanically : I go to bed at six or seven in the evening, like the fowls ; at one in the morning I am awakened, and I work till eight; at eight o'clock I sleep again for an hour and half; then I take some slight refreshment and a cup of pure coffee; and then I put myself once more in harness, and work till four

in the afternoon; then I receive visitors, take a bath, or go out; and, after dinner, I go to bed. This is the life I must lead for some months to come, if I would not be overwhelmed by my liabilities.

Profits come in slowly: debts are inexorable and remorseless. I am now in the certain road to make a fortune, but I must wait and work yet three years.

I must re-write, and again revise, to put my works into a monumental condition; a thankless labour, counting for nothing and of no immediate profit.

I want my liberty, my independence moral and pecuniary, for this object I sacrifice everything, without regret. Only I must defer going to see you, and that I cannot help regretting. One thing is certain, after all this labour, the most entire rest will be necessary. I shall go to seek it either at Angoulême or in Berry, but it must be in the country. Perhaps I may go to the waters at Aix, on my own account, for that however I must have the opinion of M. Nacquart.

But as rest will be necessary to me, the repose of a den, I must thank you once more for your indulgence towards my darling whims, the craving for elegance and grace in my surroundings. How

much poetry there is in you, and how much thoughtfulness also; two things which, on the surface, seem incompatible.

Of the two observations you make upon 'Juana,' one I will not discuss, it is a point irrevocably decided; on the other, we will say the same thing: given the same latitude, the Islander has the advantage over the native of the continent. Granted that Napoleon was educated in France, that did not destroy his insular mind.

All the workmen in Paris are being driven to their wits end to find, what would seem to be the easiest thing in the world—a box to hold your copy of 'Louis Lambert.' I hope, however, it will be ready by Tuesday next, and then you will receive it on Sunday the 17th, if the diligence does its duty.

There are still many faults in this 'Louis Lambert.' How much pains and trouble this work will have cost me; it frightens one to think of it. It is the same with the 'Peau de Chagrin;' the forthcoming edition will, I hope, be as perfect as a human work can be made. Work, and the thoughts of this narrow round of existence, have absorbed everything. I work too hard; and I am too much worried with other things to be able to pay attention to those sorrows which sleep and

make their nest in the heart. It may be that I shall lose the habit of estimating women as I do, and I shall come to the end of life, without having realised the hopes I entertained from them.

Farewell—pardon the brevity of this letter. You will divine all I do not express; but one thing you can never know fully, and that is, how intensely I desire to be at the *Poudrerie* in peace and quietness, and with you. Farewell once more, a thousand amiable things to M. Carraud, farewell —how I wish I could say, '*à demain*, we will have breakfast together.'

To M. Edmond Werdet, Publisher, Paris.

Paris: March 4, 1833.

When you, sir, came to see me the other day, my head was preoccupied with work distasteful to my imagination, and I could only imperfectly understand what you wanted of me.

My head is more free to-day; will you do me the pleasure to come and see me at four o'clock, and we can then talk.

Mille civilités.

To M. Amédée Pichot, Editor of the
'Revue de Paris.'

Paris : March 1833.

Sir,—According to the proof sheets, which I received this morning with the 'Revue,' the paragraph 3 of 'Ferragus' makes twenty-five pages; the paragraph 4 ought to do the same. I warn you of this, because in that case the next number would hardly be more than fourteen pages, if even so much.

In the interest of the 'Revue,' I am setting to work to write the last paragraph. It is a great sacrifice on my part; but if I leave the 'Revue,' I wish to give no cause for complaint.

Now for business. I wish to meet you on Monday at three o'clock, at the office of the 'Revue,' in order to settle the six months' account. I scarcely owe sixty pages; according to my own calculations, I have given a hundred. The month of March (excepting the subscription accounts and carriage of proofs, which cannot be much), will be owing to me. I wish you to be there to settle the rather disgraceful haggling which there has been about some of the lines and blank spaces, &c. I am always easy to deal with; but the last time I settled accounts, in December 1831, I was

abominably treated. This matter settled, it would be nothing extraordinary for the 'Revue' to join March and April together, and to give me a thousand francs; for if I am occupied all this week with the 'Revue,' I ought to be treated with some liberality.

I am not asking any great favour, seeing that the article written on the 'Théorie de la Démarche' has thirty-two pages, and I have almost entirely corrected them, except a few scientific additions, which are still wanting. I shall have also for April 14 the twenty pages on the Salon,[1] and the 'Théorie de la Démarche' shall have a second article.

We will settle accounts of this string of articles when the whole of the 'Théorie' shall have appeared, which will take us on to May. Then the 'Revue' will be my debtor, and we shall both be free—I to ask a great deal, 'La Revue' to refuse, and we shall separate; I, with the certainty of having always acted in the most generous and courteous manner, and 'La Revue' will have no right to do me an ill turn either in words or in articles.[2]

[1] This article on the Salon was never written.

[2] In consequence of this explanation Balzac ceased to write for the *Revue de Paris*. The *Théorie de la Démarche* appeared in *l'Europe littéraire*.

Have the goodness to send a word of reply about our rendezvous for to-morrow at three o'clock, as I shall have to quit writing your copy, which will, I hope, be all sent in by Monday.

Accept my compliments.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Angoulême.

Paris : 1833.

God knows I would gladly be at the Poudrerie. But how? I have not one volume yet printed of the new edition of the 'Chouans.' I have still twelve to thirteen sheets of the 'Médecin de Campagne' to finish; and I have to furnish this month a hundred pages to the 'Revue.' To accomplish all this, am I not obliged to stay in Paris? Then, in money matters, difficulties grow, because one's needs are regular, whilst receipts are as anomalous as if they were comets!

Certainly I hope to be at the Poudrerie on March 10. I want a good month of solitude to finish this 'Bataille,' which worries me much. I forgot the second issue of the 'Drôlatiques,' for which I have still two tales to write, of which one is the greater part of the volume.

I assure you I live in an atmosphere of thoughts,

ideas, plans, work, and conceptions, which cross each other, and boil and bubble in my head enough to madden me! Nevertheless, I do not grow thin. I am, as to the body, *le plus vrai pourtraict de moine, qui oncques ait été vu—depuis l'extrême heure des couvents.*

As regards my soul, I am profoundly sad. My work alone keeps me alive. Will there never then be a woman for me in this world? My fits of despondency and bodily weariness come upon me more frequently, and weigh upon me more heavily; to sink under this crushing load of fruitless labour, without ever having near me the gentle caressing presence of woman, for whom I have worked so much!

But let us leave all that. I have yet to thank you for all the trouble you took about my dinner-service, and for all the good things you say to me. Your letters always produce on me the effect of those lovely flowers, the perfume of which exhilarates and soothes.

I know nothing about Madame de St. S——, no more than I do of many other women, who pretend that I am their lover, and of whom I know neither the name nor the face. When in Angoulême, I saw no one. I only know you and the persons I met at your house.

We have eaten your *pâté* with a sacred reverence, thinking naturally of you in our hearts, as you may imagine. 'Le Médecin de Campagne' has cost me ten times more trouble and labour than even 'Lambert.' There is not a phrase nor an idea which has not been considered, read, re-read, and corrected. It is frightful to think of. But when one desires to attain to the simple beauty of the Gospels, and to put in practice the 'Imitation' of Thomas à Kempis, one has need to dig, and delve, and go over one's ground often!

Adieu for the present! I hope to see you soon. The delay is no fault of mine.

Hasten the people about my dinner-service. I have a dinner party to give, and I know not how soon. As to the cups, I should like them of a simple and elegant form. The dessert-plates, as you know, should be more elaborately ornamented than the others.

I send you herewith my cypher,[1] for their guidance.

[1] H.B. with the coronet of a Count.

To M. Guilbert de Pixérécourt, dramatic author, Paris.

Angoulême : April 29, 1833.

My dear Librarian (for the bargain can be made, time aiding, at least if my muse, Necessity, does not run away),—I received your amiable invitation on the day you were joyously breakfasting with your guests.; therefore, it was a physical impossibility for me to join that bibliographo-gastronomic festival ; but I had a presentiment of it, for on the road travelling to your address there is at this moment a properly perfumed *pâté de Grobot* ; it ought to be very good, and very insufficient to repay the debt of kindness which always recurs to my memory when I think of you.

A thousand kind compliments.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

Paris : Saturday, May 26, 1833.

'Thanks, my dear Auguste, a thousand times!'

I charge you, Madame, to say this to Borget, with all the accent you know how to place on heartfelt expressions. I knew very well that dear Ivan[1] and you would write to me on the road, for you

[1] Ivan was Madme Carraud's eldest son.

know by sympathy how dear and precious everything about you is to me. Yes, certainly, it is probable I shall come and see you in Berry. As if by magic, my power of hard work, my sixteen hours a day, has come back to me with greater courage and inspiration than I have ever yet known.

The 'Médecin de Campagne' is finished. You will receive it at Issoudun with the second *dizain* of the 'Drôlatiques,' at the beginning of next month. I have only eight days' work of correction of proofs. Have no fear, the end is more beautiful, to quote her whom you so justly called an angel, than the beginning. The work goes *crescendo.*

I still continue to suffer the colic, and I am promised influenza.

Vichy waters would, I think, be of service to your dear child, but wait for the effect of Frapesle. In any case, think about magnetism. My sister has been cured of the same illness as Madame Nivet's, by a course of magnetic treatment, through the simple action of my mother repeated twice a day. It is an indisputable fact. Therefore, magnetise Ivan.

I did not say good-bye either to you or to the Commandant, in order not to awake you; but I was put out at not being able to give you the

cordial and very sincere, though somewhat melancholy, kiss of farewell.

When the manuscript of the 'Privilège' is finished, I shall go and see Bourges.

It has come to saying adieu. You are one of the three persons to whom I write—but I can only write short letters, with all my proofs and work. 'Le Succube'[1] has been declared grand, sublime, gigantic! I am very glad of the success which is predicted for the second *dizain*. Adieu! once more. Write to me from Frapesle how long you will be there. I will come and see you—putting my affection for you all out of the question, I should still come to refresh my soul in the patriarchate. Besides, I shall come for the sake of one of your looks of approval; it will be my best reward for this 'Médecin de Campagne,' some of the pages of which were inspired by you. Adieu, with tenderness and gratitude.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

Paris: 1833.

I write to you in haste. Only figure to yourself I am appointed to the Tribunal of Commerce; but I have declined, especially as I place no de-

[1] One of the *Contes Drôlatiques*.

pendence on it. Mame demands everything from me all at once.

I am working day and night. The 'Médecin de Campagne' is finished; I am satisfied with the second volume.

The 'Chouans' when corrected will be announced to him by the *huissier* (sheriff's officer).

My attorney assures me I am certain to gain my lawsuit, everything being in order on my side. It would be too long to give you all the details of this tiresome affair, which locks up the thousand francs, of which I must supply the place; luckily the third part of the 'Drôlatiques' is finished, and with the 'Privilège' will make up for all; but it is work enough to make one lose one's senses!

The 'Médecin' still requires five or six days and nights to revise proofs. The second *dizain* has appeared; but Gosselin has not yet sent me any copies. I will send yours to Angoulême.

I shall write to-morrow, for the second time, to M. Nivet for what I want, and for my china toilet set.

You must still be ill, as you have only written a little scrap. When are you returning to Angoulême?

I cannot write more now, three sheets of the 'Médecin' having been just brought in for me to

read, and I have besides to correct some slip proofs for the conclusion.

A thousand remembrances to the Commändant Piston ;[1] but I am here under the play of a still greater piston, and I shall indeed want a good month's rest in September. I am sorry not to be able to say the hundredth part of the things I have to tell you ; but as regards what is in my heart, you know it all.

To M. Charles Gosselin, Publisher, Paris.

Paris : 1833.

Sir,—It is impossible for me to leave the correction of the third and fourth volumes in 18mo. of the 'Chouans' for a single instant, the judgment of arbitration deeming that I must transmit the third to M. Mame on Tuesday, and I am too anxious to have nothing more to do with him, to fail through delay. Thus I have only just time to finish it, and the shortest absence from home hinders me much more than a conference at home.

Therefore, everyone having business with me must obey this necessity. I am free till midnight. Nevertheless, Tuesday being only the 17th, there

[1] A name given by Balzac to M. Carraud.

will still be time between now and the 20th to pay the first instalment of my indemnity.

You can also bestow more reflection on this business, which is very important, and of great extent as an operation.

However, if we do not come to an agreement on Tuesday, I shall only have a very few moments, and it is not my intention to run after anyone, understand this.

Since the letter which I wrote to you, some one has already been to request, if you would not take the whole of the affair, to be allowed to share it with you. I replied that you had already given me to understand that it was not your intention to act with any publisher.

I have sixteen copies of the 'Bulletin des Lois,' with the Index of the Galiffet edition: I should like to exchange them for books. I should like the 'Grands Historiens de France,' in parts, from Arthus Bertrand, also the 'Mémoires de Saint-Simon;' if this suit you, and also M. Renouard, we could arrange this matter.

Accept my compliments.

To the Duchesse d'Abrantès, Versailles.

Paris: 1833.

There is nothing to divide us, but seventeen hours a day of work, and the physical impossi-

bility of going anywhere, except to my attorney about my lawsuit with Mame, whom I should not like to meet at your house.

You seemed willing last winter to come and see me in my den. I then said, 'Come, and we will have a gossip.' I am now more oppressed than ever by my work. I have to send in an historical novel, called 'Le Privilège' by the end of the month; I have five or six articles promised to friends; in fact, I am walled up in my work. Nevertheless, for you, I am quite ready to fix an evening when we may be alone, and always friends.

I do not know if I can be free on Monday, but you shall be sure to see me on the day when I am not detained by proofs for press.

To Madame Laure Surville, Monglat.

Paris: June 1833.

My dear Laura,—You go away without saying 'by your leave;' the poor workman runs down to your house to have a partaker in a small pleasure, and finds no sister! As I torment you so often with my troubles, I must at least write you word of this little pleasure.

You will not laugh at me, you will believe me, you will!

. . . . . .

I went to call yesterday on Baron Gérard; he presented three German families to me. I thought I was dreaming. Three families! . . . Nothing less! . . . One came from Vienna; the other from Frankfort; the third was Prussian, from what part I do not know.

They confided to me they had come faithfully to call on Gérard for a month past, in the hope of meeting me, and they told me further, that outside the frontier of France my reputation begins (dear ungrateful country!) They added, 'Persevere, and you will soon be at the head of literary Europe!'—of Europe, dear sister, they really said so! Flattering families!

. . . . . .

Ma foi! They were benevolent Germans, and I allowed myself to believe that they thought what they said; and to tell the truth, I could have listened to them all night. Praise agrees so well with us artists. These honest Germans revived my courage, and I went away from Gérard's quite gaily. I intend to open a triple fire on the public and on the envious, to wit: 'Eugénie Grandet,' 'Les Aventures d'une Idée heureuse,' which you

know, and my 'Prêtre Catholique,' one of my finest subjects.

The affair of the 'Études de Mœurs' is going on well; thirty thousand francs as the author's share will stop many holes. This block of debts once removed out of my road, I shall go to seek my reward at Geneva. Thus the horizon begins to clear.

I have again begun my routine of work. I go to bed at ten o'clock, with my dinner in my mouth—the animal digests and sleeps till midnight. Auguste wakens me with a cup of coffee, upon which the mind works without a break till noon. I run to the printing-office, to take my copy and to bring back my proofs—in order to give the animal exercise, and he dreams as he walks along. One can put a great deal of black upon white in twelve hours, little sister—and by the end of a month of this kind of life a good deal is accomplished. The poor Pen! it ought to be made of diamond, not to wear out at this rate! To increase its master's reputation—as the Germans prescribed—to acquit him of all his debts, and finally to earn for him, some day, his repose on the mountain side—such is the task for my Pen!

'Que diable allez-vous faire à Monglat?' Of

course, you are free to go there, and I do not reproach you. I only ask from a curiosity which may be pardoned between brother and sister.

Addio! addio! correct 'Le Médecin' carefully: mark all the passages which you think weak, and *mets les grands pots dans les petits*—that is to say, if a thing can be said in one line instead of two, try to say it.

To M. Forfellier, chief Editor of the 'Écho de la jeune France.'

Paris: June 1833.

Sir,—There are some false assertions in your note (relative to the publication of the 'Duchesse de Langeais' in the 'Écho de la jeune France'); if you publish it, I shall answer it.

If it enters the region of personality, I shall demand satisfaction, and I will have it.

You know that your two hundred francs are all ready. The scandal which you are seeking will oblige me to take a decided course with you.

Lastly, I must repeat that you transgress all laws, not only of politeness but of uprightness, in refusing to recognise that I never conceded more to you than the use of my article.

Your servant.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Angoulême.

Paris : August 2, 1833.

I answer you at once, under the influence of the emotions caused by your letter. You are suffering! Think of me, think of magnetism, which is no illusion. I would travel a hundred leagues to save you two days' pain. You do not know how faithful and exclusive and devoted I am in friendship! Do not fancy that because I am able to traverse all the points of the circumference of the circle, I cannot remain fixed to the centre. When I think of you, I have the gratitude still fresh in my heart of the time when you showed yourself so sweet and indulgent towards the foolish irritation caused in me by the use of coffee. I wish I were still at the Poudrerie!

I can give you news of the lawsuit. The supreme judgment is delivered. Messrs. Dupin and Boinvilliers, the two most distinguished advocates of the Bar, have decided that I 'showed ill will' in taking eight months to write the 'Médecin de Campagne.' They have given me four months to write 'Les Trois Cardinaux.' And they are persons of intelligence! In default of fulfilling this award, I am liable to a fine of three thousand eight hundred francs—which would set me

free. The Duke of Fitzjames has written me a letter, which has deeply touched me. As soon as he heard of this decision, he begged me to draw at sight on his banker for three thousand eight hundred francs, so that I might deliver myself from this hangman! I declined gratefully; saying that hitherto, in all the emergencies of my life, my courage had proved stronger than my misfortunes; but I promised that if by any sudden turn of affairs I should find myself in need of these three thousand eight hundred francs, I would borrow them from him for a month.

The sentence pronounces my publisher to be a liar, a calumniator, and to have behaved outrageously towards me; but none the less have my judges decided that I must continue my business relations with him.

And yet my judges are men of honour, everybody says so.

My publisher is condemned to pay me three thousand francs for 'Le Médecin de Campagne,' and since the sentence was pronounced he has refused to do this.

An enormous expense was incurred in enforcing the judgment, and this very day my work has been seized in default of payment.

Such is my life: lawyers, lawsuits, worries without end. *Faites donc de belles choses.*

I have received poignard stabs from chapter to chapter, whilst writing this work, which my friends, even the most fastidious of them, consider sublime. It has personally cost me a thousand francs for corrections, of which the arbitrators have taken no account whatever. I say nothing of my nights and days of work, of my health undermined by the abuse of coffee. . . .

I am going to the 'Journal des Enfants' for Ivan.

Take much care of yourself.

Now adieu! I have forgotten myself for your sake.

I only intended to say two words. But how can one help gossiping when with hearty friends? You are right, friendship is not found ready made. Thus every day mine for you increases; it has its root both in the past and in the present. A thousand good words to the Commandant.

To M. Charles Gosselin, Paris.

Paris: August 1833.

Sir,—My lawsuit against Mame the publisher has been a case of *force majeure*, which has prevented me from finishing 'Le Privilège,' according to my agreement.

I think, however, there is a method by which your interests and my own may be rendered identical.

By virtue of the sentence given against Mame, and in consequence of the heavy engagements undertaken with Messrs. Dieuloulard and Boulland, I became two days ago repossessed of all my rights to 'Les Scènes de la Vie Parisienne,' so that the great work of 'Études des Mœurs au XIX^me^ Siècle' is free.

If, then, you would undertake the publication of it, my literary obligations to you would be met. The desire you have expressed to publish the 'Scènes de la Vie privée' will not be interfered with. If this proposal suits you, be good enough to let me know at once, because I am obliged to have this matter settled before the 20th of this month.

You are aware that this publication comprises twelve volumes in octavo ; in which are contained, six volumes of reprints of books, three of articles which are reprints, and three volumes which have not yet been published.

'Les Scènes de la Vie privée.'

'Les Scènes de la Vie de Province.'

'Les Scènes de la Vie Parisienne.'

'Les Scènes de la Vie de Campagne.'

If it does not suit you to undertake the publication, let me know at once, because several persons have already made me proposals.

To M. Charles de Bernard, Besançon.

Paris : August 1833.

Sir,—I do not know whether you are at Besançon, but in the uncertainty I write again.

On Sunday the 22nd, I leave for Besançon by the mail. I shall be there on Tuesday morning for a short time ; but during this short time, I should like to see you, in order to speak of something which requires a knowledge of the country, and which concerns me personally; also, of something which may be very agreeable to you.

If this letter finds you at Besançon, would you have the goodness to ensure me a place in whatever vehicle goes the quickest, and the earliest to Neuchâtel ? You would oblige me infinitely. On Tuesday, then ! Accept, I beg, a thousand assurances of esteem, and of my highest consideration.

To M. Charles de Bernard, Besançon.

Neuchâtel, end of September, 1833.

My dear M. de Bernard,—I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again on Wednesday,

October 2. Would you be so obliging as to take a place for me in the mail to Paris?

I heartily hope you may have something to say to me about your plan, that is, if you have worked at it.

I have been very happy here. I am much pleased with what I have seen; the country is delightful; but you know that Jupiter has two urns, and that *the gods have no favours which are complete.*

It seems to me as if I had given you very small thanks for the pleasant day you gave me; but I hope to prove that I am not ungrateful.

Adieu till Wednesday, believe that I shall have great pleasure in seeing you again, you who have caused my visit to Besançon to be not useless, and also enabling me to find pleasure in it. Accept a thousand kind compliments, and the obedience of a person who is glad to say he is ever yours.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Angoulême.

Neuchâtel: end of September, 1833.

I have just escorted the great Borget as far as the frontier of the sovereign states of this city. As you may imagine, you have made a third in

our long and pleasant friendly gossip. We love you much, and we are both of us of a dog-like nature as regards fidelity.

Paris : October 5.

I finish the letter here, begun at Neuchâtel. Figure to yourself that at the very moment when I had snugly settled myself at the side of the fire, to write to you at length in reply to your last kind letter, I was fetched away to go and see places, and this lasted until my departure, which took place on October 1. I was four days on the road, and here I am at last—thoroughly tired.

I will not tell you more in this letter, for you will find at M. Sazerac's a little case or parcel containing your box to hold your writing paper. Take care when you undo the parcel; the key is wrapped in paper, and as it is small you might lose it.

You will find a letter in the box, in which I explain all concerning M. Calluau.

This, then, is only a letter to announce the parcel, and as it will arrive first, I send you now a thousand tender expressions of my affection. Endeavour so to arrange things, that I may come and see you.

A hearty shake of the hand to the Commandant.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Angoulême.

Paris: October 5, 1833: evening.

I am writing, as you see, on the very prettiest paper in the world, and my letter will be enclosed in just the most fashionable of envelopes! Does it come from you? I know nothing—I found it here; it had been brought by someone unknown, who refused to say by whom he had been sent.

This proceeding, coming from you, would surprise me, for you are quite aware how much I love you, the importance I attach to your opinions, and my admiration for the nobility of your nature. I think you and I are above these little mysteries. The present must have come from some other person—and if that be the case, I am not pleased. I do not choose to accept anything except from yourself, whom I love so well and to whom I would like to offer so many things and so much friendship that you should always be in my debt. If, then, this paper does not come from you, will you try to find out who sent it? If it has been sent by you, I think there must have been some mistake, about which we will speak no more.

I have not sent your scented sachet in this

box, because it is not yet finished, but it shall be sent all in good time.

Write soon, for I wish to know if this paper has been sent by you; if it comes from anyone else I shall detest it, precisely because as paper it pleases me.

Now let us come to our undertaking.[1] Borget has taken from M. Surville two coupons of three thousand francs each; my mother and Surville take each of them three at the same rate; I have kept one for myself; this makes six coupons: there still remain three coupons; the undertaking consisting of nine coupons, at three thousand francs each. Of these three, I think my mother purposed to take two for my brother; there remains, therefore, only one to be taken up for three thousand francs. Borget will bring you a copy of our deed of partnership. Judge for yourself whether this small share in the matter will be agreeable to you. I should have been very pleased if the Commandant Périollas and yourself had been sharers in this affair, for it is as safe as any speculation can be. In this state of the case, think it over, and if you find the rate of interest too

[1] This undertaking was to manufacture a special paper for an edition of Balzac's works. The project came to nothing.

low, I might be able to arrange that with my mother.

Here is the business part of the matter. Be good enough to go to see M. Calluau, and propose to him the conditions on which he may supply us.

1. We must have machine-made paper, 2 ft. 11 in. long by 2 ft. 7 in. wide; the *rame* must contain five hundred sheets, and must weigh from twenty-eight to thirty pounds. We can only give him from fifty to sixty centimes a pound. As concerns the quality, I send you a pattern for the white paper, and for the style of workmanship. It is the specimen of a paper that has been offered to us at sixty-five centimes a pound. A saving of a penny upon a pound of paper would send all France to buy it, for the speciality of our undertaking lies in the prodigious economy of the process of manufacture. This settled, M. Calluau, if he accepts the order, must make us a sample of the paper, and all he furnishes afterwards must be of the same quality. We shall pay ready money on the delivery of the paper.

We should need about 120 *rames* a month; the supply might be doubled by the end of two months, and be tripled before the sixth month. He would always have to keep in stock 140 *rames*, certified and ready for use, so that we may always

have a sufficient quantity of paper on hand, before we increase our issue, in order not to run short in case we should need paper from day to day.

The first instalment would be needed between November 15 and December 1.

If these proposals suit him, my partners and myself would draw up a deed of the terms, adding to it a specimen sheet of the paper, and I would myself come to Angoulême by the next mail.

Will you kindly see at once to this affair, you and M. Carraud, so that I may have a reply the soonest possible. This business must be transacted with the speed of lightning.

Now I want to speak about yourself, about myself, but I have no time for anything. I hope soon to be in Angoulême, and then we shall have one or two good days for all we have to say, but I will not wait for this journey to express all the affectionate gratitude there is in my heart for your last letter, and to tell you that all literary annoyances only drive me more entirely to take refuge in the heart of those who love me to find consolation there. You have not, then, heard how 'Le Médecin' has been received? By torrents of abuse! The three journals of my party have spoken of it with the most profound contempt for the work and for the author; as regards the other

organs, I know nothing, they cause me no pain. You are my public, you and a few other chosen souls, whom I wish to please; but yourself especially, whom I am proud to know, you whom I have never seen nor listened to without gaining some benefit, you who have the courage to aid me in tearing out the evil weeds from my field, you who encourage me to perfect myself, you who resemble so much that angel to whom I owe everything; in short, you who are so good towards my ill-doings (*'mauvaisetés'*). I alone know how quickly I turn to you. I have recourse to your encouragements, when some arrow has wounded me; it is the wood-pigeon regaining its nest. I bear you an affection which resembles no other, and which can have no rival, because it is alone of its kind.

It is so bright and pleasant near you! From afar, I can tell you, without fear of being put to silence, all I think about your mind, about your life.

No one can wish more earnestly that the road here below may be smooth for you. I should like to send you all the flowers you love, as I often send above your head the most ardent prayers and wishes for your happiness.

There are still many faults to be corrected in

'Le Médecin'—another edition must precede the cheap one—for I do not wish any work of mine to be made popular until it is as perfect as it is given to me to make it.

Come yet a few months more of work, and I shall have made a great step. This winter I shall finish several works, by which I shall perhaps make my mark. After 'Louis Lambert' and the 'Médecin de Campagne,' I shall bring out in the same line, 'Les Souffrances de l'Inventeur,' 'L'Histoire d'une Idée heureuse,' and 'César Birotteau.' When these three great works are finished, perhaps I shall have merited one of those kindly looks which you give me, and which I count amongst my sweetest, my most precious rewards; for I place you among the number of those most perfect beings who console us for being in the world.

I must leave you. I must say adieu, while I have still so many things to say. A thousand things to the Commandant. Endeavour that I may see you in eight days from now.

To the Duchesse d'Abrantès, Versailles.

Paris : 1833.

Instead of the great secret, I found on my return a letter, which came too late to read before my departure—I only came home on Sunday.

Why do you want my authorisation to speak well of the 'Médecin de Campagne,' while the whole world speaks ill of it, on its own private authority?

This little note is intended to convey a thousand testimonies of friendship. I write whilst my bath is being prepared. I have been travelling four days and nights in a kind of hen-roost, for want of room in a better place. I cannot understand why on all the high roads in Switzerland there are thirty travellers in each town, who are all waiting for places. I am knocked up by a most useless journey, but which has enchanted me. I never saw more lovely scenery than that I have passed through; the Val de Travers seems made for two lovers.

A thousand tender regards; soon to meet, I hope. Do not mention my return to anyone. I have to pass through ten days of pressing work, during which I shall be like a worm eating its way through a beam.

To Madame Laure Surville, Monglat.

Paris: 1833.

Two letters from my sister not answered! Luckily, you do not keep a reckoning with me; I knew that long ago. What a dear and sweet affection is that which causes one no anxiety!

You are convinced, are you not, that I can never forget her who took my part when I was a child, who beat me, and who played me those merry tricks, which brought with them such joyous laughs. . . . Happy times, whither are you fled?

I am correcting 'Eugénie Grandet,'

'Je ne dors ni ne veille
Cet enfant me réveille,'

and leaves me but little leisure.

If you knew what it is to knead up ideas, to give them form and colour, you would not be so quick at criticism.

Ah! so there are too many millions of money in 'Eugénie Grandet'? You goose, since the story is true, do you want me to do better than the truth? You are not aware how money grows in the hands of misers. Still, if your outcries are well founded, I will either justify the amount or reduce it in the next edition.

I have brought home an idea that will make

a grand book from Switzerland.[1] We will talk it over when you return.

To M. Charles Gosselin, Paris.

Paris: November 16, 1833.

Sir,—I reply to your letter of yesterday, November 15, and we are now definitely agreed.

'Le Marquis de Carabas' shall be withdrawn, as you propose, from our agreement.

On January 18 next I will send you, subject to the corrections on which we shall afterwards agree, a copy of the two volumes of 'Contes philosophiques,' of which one volume will be fresh matter, under a penalty of five hundred francs demurrage for every fortnight after time. This portion of the work will replace 'Le Privilège,' a novel in two volumes, which I was to have delivered to you in May 1834.

You can announce, this very day, the two volumes of stories, the titles and the subjects being quite settled—'Les Souffrances de l'Inventeur,' 'Aventures administratives d'une Idée heureuse et patriotique,' César Birotteau,' 'Le Prêtre Catholique.'

If the printer whom you select is sufficiently

[1] This book was *Séraphita.*

rich in types to set up both these volumes, there will be no delay on my side to interfere with their appearance on February 1 next.

Accept my hearty compliments.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Angoulême.

Paris: December, 1833.

Unless I write to you at once after reading your letter the chances are that it will not be answered at all. I am carried off my feet by a torrent of proofs, of work, of writing, and of business, which leave me no time to think of anything.

I have just written to M. D——. I went yesterday to Émile de Girardin, and he went to him. He can there have a situation of from 90 to 100 francs a month; but it required all my love for *you* to enable me to endure the impertinence of Émile.

I cannot come to Angoulême before the first fortnight in January. I am going to Geneva to stay there a month but I will come to you—of that you may be quite sure.

As to M. Bohain,[1] there are many calumnies afloat about him; there are also some things that

[1] Editor of *L'Europe littéraire.*

are true; but you may feel assured that I am too careful of that white robe which is called glory, honour, reputation, to let any spot fall upon it.

Thanks for your good letter; thanks also for that of Auguste. Tell him that all shall be as he wishes, that I am his banker, and that when I come he can tell me what it is that he wants. I cannot write a reply to his letter, but I can think of him and love him.

I do not get more than five hours' sleep; from midnight to midday I work at my composition, and from noon till four o'clock I correct my proofs. By the 25th I shall have four volumes in print. 'Eugénie Grandet' will surprise you. Something very important has happened to me. I cannot tell you about it until I come to Angoulême. Perhaps I may then claim all your friendship for something which I can confide to no one but yourself. A thousand tender things to yourself; and say for me to M. Carraud and to Auguste all that I have not the time to say.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Angoulême.

Paris : end of December 1833.

What a beautiful present, what a precious remembrance you give me, I who know what you put into each stitch of embroidery! A thousand times thanks!

I can say nothing about your criticisms [1] excepting this—facts are against you. There is a grocer at Tours who possesses eight millions of francs; M. Eynard, who is only a hawker, has twenty million francs, and has thirteen millions in gold in his house, which in 1814 he invested at fifty-six francs in the 'Grand Livre,' and thus made it into twenty millions. I will answer your criticisms, for which I thank you, one by one when I reach Frapesle. Perhaps you will then see that the author may have one point of view, whilst the reader may have another. But nothing can express what my gratitude is, for the maternal care which prompts your observations.

For heaven's sake, *cara*, do not accuse yourself as though you had been in fault; there must always be some truth in the feelings of a great and noble soul like your own, especially when a solitude filled with thoughts enlarges it. Yes,

[1] On 'Eugénie Grandet.'

dépend upon it, I will come to Frapesle, and I think I may succeed in obtaining the companionship of Madame de Berny; I found her on my arrival here yesterday so very ill that I was seriously alarmed, and I am still in most miserable anxiety. Her life is so much bound up in mine! Ah, no one can form any true idea of this deep attachment which sustains me in all my work, and consoles me every moment in all I suffer. You can understand something of this, you who know so well what friendship is, you who are so affectionate, so good. As soon as I am at rest from this anxiety, I will write to you. I thank you beforehand for your offer of Frapesle to her.

There, amid your flowers, and in your gentle companionship, and the country life, if convalescence is possible, and I venture to hope for it, she will regain life and health. Pardon the incoherence of this letter, for I am very uneasy. I only returned yesterday. The sight of Madame de Berny has entirely upset me. A thousand friendly thanks. I am plunging once more into my work. On February 25 there will appear a portion in two volumes of the 'Études des Mœurs;' tell me if I shall send a copy to the Poudrerie or to Frapesle. Say all that is kind to Auguste. My 'Séraphita' is in a very forward state. My

best remembrances to the Commandant, whom I congratulate on his retirement. Give Ivan a kiss on the forehead, and keep my tenderest regards for yourself.

Adieu, you whom I never forget.

Votre tout dévoué.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Angoulême.

Geneva : January 30, 1834.

My dearest flower of friendship,—Never accuse me of forgetfulness. I have thought much about you ; I have even spoken of you with pride, congratulating myself on possessing a second conscience in you.

The work I have done is nothing compared with the work that lies before me. 'Séraphita' is more cruelly difficult to the author than any other he has yet undertaken. My liberation makes but slow progress. The *fiasco* of the 'Médecin de Campagne' and of 'Louis Lambert' has grieved me, but I am determined nothing shall discourage me. By next August I hope to be free ; but by the month of April I ought, I believe, to be well advanced. Nevertheless, I shall never let a year pass over without coming to inhabit my room at Frapesle.

I am sorry for all your annoyances; I should like to know you are already at home, and believe me I am not averse to an agricultural life, and even if you were in any sort of hell, I would go there to join you.

In February you will have my second issue of 'Études des Mœurs.' You have been very little touched with my poor 'Eugénie Grandet,' which describes provincial life so well, but I believe a work which is intended to comprise every shade of character and all social ranks cannot be understood until it is finished. It will be something worth doing, if the day comes when twenty volumes in octavo will be reduced to ten volumes, so as to be within reach of everybody's purse. Whilst I have been here, I have written two 'Contes drôlatiques;' and the best of them all ('Berthe la Repentie') would have been finished before now had it not been for an influenza, of which I am still the victim.

Some day, *cara*, when you read the 'Études des Mœurs' and the 'Études philosophiques' by your fireside at Frapesle, you will understand why I write in such an unconnected manner; I am dazed by ideas which crowd upon me, I am craving for rest, and I am annoyed besides at my position, which is that of a bird on a bending branch.

Germany has bought two thousand copies of the pirated edition of 'Louis Lambert,' while in France two hundred copies of the work have not been sold.

Yet am I writing 'Séraphita,' which is a work as far superior to 'Louis Lambert' as 'Louis Lambert' is above 'Gaudissart,' which Boyet tells me you never much liked. We will talk about it hereafter. It seems decreed that I shall never have complete happiness, the happiness of liberation from debt, nor freedom, except in perspective. But, dear friend, let me at least tell you now, in the fulness of my heart, that during this long and painful road four noble beings have faithfully held out their hands to me, encouraged me, loved me, and had compassion on me; and you are one of them, who have in my heart an inalienable privilege and priority over all other affections; every hour of my life upon which I look back is filled with precious memories of you. Yes; the egoism of poets and artists is a passion for art, which holds their personal feelings in reserve. You will always have the right to command me, and all that is in me is yours. When I have any dreams of happiness, you always take a part in them; and to be considered worthy of your esteem is to me a far higher prize than all the vanities the world can

bestow. No, you can give me no amount of affection which I do not desire from my heart to return you a thousand-fold. But, poor slave of my work that I am, bound to write phrases, I can give you no sign of my attachment; I am like a goat tethered to its stake. When will the capricious hand of Fortune set me free?· I know not. But, come, I must say adieu; a letter is a luxury in my case. I thank you for all your good things; your letters do me so much good. There are a few persons whose approval I desire, and yours is one of those I hold most dear.

To Madame la Duchesse d'Abrantès.

Paris: 1834.

I was working night and day, not even reading my letters, when you wrote me those two. People who are on the field of battle, as you know, are not free to converse nor to let their friends know whether they are alive or dead. I am dead—dead from work; but I send you my book to prove that the dead do not forget when they have *you* to remember, and they are *votre tout dévoué.*

To Madame Charles Béchet, Publisher, Paris.

April 16, 1834.

Madame,—Our third portion of 'Études des Mœurs' can hardly appear before May 20. I give you notice of this, in order that it may not interfere with your commercial arrangements by deceiving you with false hopes. I was obliged to quit Paris for ten days for the sake of rest. I was so terribly over-fatigued, and before I went I was confined to my bed for four days. My doctor ordered me to cease from work entirely.

Nevertheless, this delay will be all for the benefit of the unpublished portion which I undertook to supply over and above our agreement—somewhat rashly. To form a volume of twenty-four sheets, in addition to the original fourth volume of the 'Scènes de la Vie privée,' four fresh sheets must be added, which will mount up to eight sheets, supposing there to have been twenty-four in the old edition.

All this work will greatly improve your bargain; by rendering the edition quite new, and by suppressing the two first editions of the 'Scènes,' the rapid sale of these twelve volumes will be secured.

I am bound to give you these explanations,

in order that you may understand the alterations which this unexpected work brings into both the literary and mechanical execution; for you can well understand that an author cannot add four sheets to an already completed book, without some little thought, nor intercalate them without some labour. I shall be in Paris on the 23rd. I calculate that, seconded as I am by M. Barbier, who works miracles, we shall be able to bring out the third volume of the 'Scènes de la Vie privée' between April 23 and May 20, which will be altogether fresh unpublished matter; but it will require enormous exertion to arrive at this result!

On the other hand, the fourth portion will only contain eighteen sheets of fresh matter in the fifty sheets already published, and I shall be able to take it more leisurely, and it may appear on June 20. I beg, madame, that you will at the earliest moment possible exchange with M. Gosselin the first and second parts of the 'Études' for the four volumes of my 'Romans et Contes philosophiques,' which I am very anxious should be sold out, and of which he has very few copies left.

Accept, madame, my sincere respects.

To Madame Émile de Girardin, Paris.

Paris : 1834.

Madame,—Since the day when I had last the honour of seeing you, I have seen no one. I am therefore ignorant of who can possibly have told you that I am offended with you, and wherefore ? We are not offended with people unless we have done them some wrong, and the only fault against you which I can lay to my own charge is that I have not availed myself of your friendly invitations, but those are reasons which should increase my regard for you.

I am grateful for your kind remembrance of me ; but I shall not be able to come to see you for a long time, for I am plunged into the quagmire of the proofs and corrections of two works, for which I am pressed for time. Accept my respectful homage.

To Madame Émile de Girardin, Paris.

Paris : 1834.

Madame,—Your invitation came after I had accepted another from which I could not disengage myself. But apart from this, I tell you frankly that I should feel it inconsistent to come

to your house to see you, as I can no longer come when M. de Girardin would be at home. The regret I experience is caused quite as much by the blue eyes and blonde hair of a lady, who I believe to be my best friend—and whom I would gladly have for mine—as by those black eyes which you recall to my remembrance, and which had made an impression upon me. But indeed, I cannot come. My labours will force me to bid you farewell for a long time, for as soon as the third part of 'Les Études des Mœurs' is published, I shall take refuge in the country, and I shall not return for three months. Accept my respectful homage, and all kind and gracious regards; and do not forget to express my regrets to Madame O'Donnel, and to those same black eyes which &c., &c.

To the Baron Gérard, Paris.

Paris: June 8, 1834.

Sir,—What I send has no other end than the friendly feeling accompanying it; it was the copy I had reserved for myself, but I could not place the author's mite better.

I add to the four published volumes of the

'Études des Mœurs' my first daub,[1] which has just appeared to-day in a retouched condition; though, in spite of my endeavours, I fear the student's hand is still too visible.

It will be an honour to be permitted to be in your library.

Accept, sir, the expression of my highest regards.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Monday, 2 o'clock a.m., 1834.

My good *alma soror*!—Your husband and Sophie came yesterday and had a detestable dinner in my bachelor's den at Chaillot; this was all the more provoking, because the kind brother had been running about all day for me, to see a house which I wish to buy.

I have just made a good arrangement with the 'Estafette;' the other great papers will all come back to me in time; they will need me. Besides, have they deprived me of my estates in my brain, my literary vines, and my intellectual woods? and are there not still remaining publishers to work them? These last, not under-

[1] The *Chouans*.

standing their true interests (you will hardly believe it), prefer the works which have not appeared in any review; this is not the time to enlighten them: nevertheless, it is certain that a first impression saves them advertisements, and the more a work is known, the better it will sell. Do not make yourself unhappy, there is no danger yet in the dwelling; I am tired, it is true, but I am accepting the invitation of M. de Margonne, and I am to pass two months at Saché, where I shall rest and take care of myself. I shall try some theatrical writing, whilst finishing my 'Père Goriot,' and correcting 'La Recherche de l'Absolu.' I shall begin with 'Marie Touchet,' a proud piece, which I shall fit up with proud personages.

I will not sit up so late; do not torment yourself about this pain in the side. Listen, I must be just, if vexations bring on a liver complaint, I shall not have stolen it. But stop, Madame la Mort! if you come, let it be to replace my burden; I have not yet finished my task . . . Do not be too anxious, the sky will be blue again! . . .

The 'Lys dans la Vallée,' is dedicated to Dr. Nacquart, and the dedication will move him to tears. I tell him that I inscribe his name on this stone of the edifice, as much to thank the wise man

to whom I owe my life, as to honour the friend. Poor doctor! he truly merits it.

The 'Médecin de Campagne' is being reprinted, it was a failure in the (booksellers') trade. Is not this pleasant?

The widow Béchet has been sublime: she has taken upon herself the expense of more than four thousand francs of corrections, which were set down to me. Is not this still pleasanter?

Well, if God gives me life, I shall have a good position, and we shall all be happy; let us laugh, my good sister, the house of Balzac will triumph. Shout loudly with me, so that Fortune may hear us; and once again, do not torment yourself. . . .

To Madame de Girardin, Paris.

Paris: 1834.

Madame,—I have just enough understanding and feeling to know that I can say nothing in my own justification. If I were too much in the right, I should give you pain, and if I were in the wrong I should lose in your estimation. Upon this matter I shall preserve a complete silence, to all others as I am doing towards you; but my determination is irrevocable; this is not a quarrel nor a mistake, it is a conviction. I have decided

that I will not again enter the house of M. de Girardin, and that, even if I should meet him, he would be to me as one I had never seen before. It has given me great pain to be forced to set aside all your goodness to me, to renounce all our pleasant conversations. I entreat you to believe that the cause is both serious and painful. I shall never be either inimical or friendly towards M. de Girardin. I shall neither accuse him nor defend him. Everything will be to me a matter of indifference, except as it may cause you pain or pleasure.

Do not accuse me of littleness; for I think I am too great to be offended by anyone in the world. But there are certain sentiments which I give or withhold; I cannot be false, I cannot play a part. Your *salon* was almost the only one where I found myself on a footing of friendship. You will hardly perceive my absence; and I remain alone. I thank you with sincere and affectionate feeling, for your kind persistence. I believe you to be actuated by a good motive; and you will always find in me a something of devotion towards you in all that personally concerns yourself.

To M. Théodore Dablin, Paris.

Paris: 1830.

My dear Dablin,—I am suffering under one of those frightful prostrations which follow excess. I am incapable of everything; it all arises from my having given up strong *café noir*. Be so kind then as to put off our dinner until Monday; if you cannot, you must let me know. My book will not appear till Monday; meantime here is a fresh copy of the 'Médecin de Campagne.'

Pardon the incoherence of this letter. I am not able to write. I am in one of those states of suffering which only God knows.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Saché: 1834.

My dear Sister,—To-day I am feeling so sad, that there must be something sympathetic in this sadness. Is anyone whom I love unhappy? My mother—is she ill? Where is my good Surville? Is he well in body and soul? Have you received any news about Henry?—are they good? You and your little ones, are any of you ill? Write, and set my mind at rest without delay on all these points so dear to me. My attempts at plays

have all gone wrong, and I must give up dramatic writing for the present. The historical drama requires great scenic effects, which I do not understand. As to comedy, Molière, whom I would make my model, is a most heart-breaking master. It would require days and days to produce anything worth having in this line, and it is just time that fails me. In every scene there are innumerable difficulties, and I have no leisure to set legs and arms in play. A masterpiece and my name would open all doors to me, but I am a long way yet from a masterpiece. That my reputation may not be compromised, I must find some borrowed names; this takes time, and the worst of it is, I have no time to lose. I regret this, because these works are more profitable than my books, and would sooner extricate me from my difficulties.

But it is a long time since I and suffering measured our strength against each other; I have overcome her, I will overcome her again. If I fail, it will have been the will of Heaven, not mine.

The pain it gives you to hear of my troubles ought to check me from speaking of them; but how to prevent my too full heart from pouring itself out to you? It is not right, however; it requires a robust organisation to support the

torments of an author's life, and that is what you women do not possess.

I work more than is desirable; but what would you have? When I am at work, I forget my troubles: it is what saves me; but you—you forget nothing! There are people whom this faculty of mine offends, and they redouble my torments by not understanding me.

I ought to insure my life, in order to leave a little money to my mother in the event of my death. Can I stand the expense? I will see about it on my return.

The time which the inspiration caused by coffee formerly lasted has now diminished; it only gives a fortnight's excitement to the brain—a fatal excitement, for it causes me horrible pains in the stomach.

What energy is required to keep the head sane when the mind suffers so much! . . . My best inspirations have, however, always shone out in my hours of extreme anguish; they are then about to shine again. I shall say no more; Heaven ought to bestow a more fortunate brother on such an affectionate sister.

To Madame Laure Surville.

Saché: 1834.

My dear Sister,—Your letter is the first congratulation I have received on the 'Recherche de l'Absolu.' Your affection makes you out-speed the rest of the world . . . You are right, the praises in the sincerity of which one can believe do the soul good, and are the rewards of us poor literary labourers.

I was quite foolishly touched by your kind words.

I think you are wrong about the *longeurs* which you point out; they have ramifications throughout the subject which have escaped you. Also, I stand by Marguerite; no, she is not an overstrained character, for Marguerite is a Fleming; and those women never follow more than one idea, and they follow their aim doggedly to the end.

Your criticisms are gentle; we will talk them over another time, and if they are repeated by others, I will give them consideration. I am here only to work like a horse, and for nothing else. On Saturday you will have a manuscript, 'a grand work,' more moving even than 'Eugénie

Grandet,' or the 'Recherche de l'Absolu.' It has cost me dear, however!

Much love and tenderness to yourself especially.

To Madame de Balzac, Chantilly.

Paris: 1834.

My good Mother,—I am like one on the field of battle and the struggle is desperate. I cannot reply to you in a long letter; but I have been well considering what is the best course to pursue. In the first place, I think you must come up to Paris to talk to me for an hour, so that you and I may understand each other. It is easier for me to talk than to write, and I think everything may be arranged in accordance with what is due to your own position. Come to me, then, whenever you wish to come; here, Rue des Batailles, as at Rue Cassini, you shall have the bed-room of that son whose heart your smallest words have the power to shake, and it is trembling even now. Come the soonest possible moment. I press you to my heart, and I wish I were a year older. Do not make yourself anxious about me; there is every prospect of security for my future course.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Angoulême.

Paris : August, 1834.

Madame,—No, I do not forget you ; but I am working day and night, and have not a minute to write to you. I entreat you to let me have one line to tell me how you are. In a fortnight you will receive from me two new volumes, which have cost me much labour. I have only two more difficulties to arrange, and then I shall have no more plague from publishers. Gosselin is disinterested in everything. I have on the one side Madame Béchet, and on the other a new publisher named Werdet ; who will neither of them worry me : then I am looking for a third publisher to undertake the 'Cents Contes drôlatiques.' This done, with six months' work, I shall be free. I shall owe no one either a page or a *sou*, and my interest in my own works will be quite free, and at my own disposal. I shall have reached this oasis through many troubles and privations, of which the greatest are sometimes to have tired the patience of my friends, and not to have been able to let them see into the depths of my heart.

I have been meditating a great tragedy which next year will be a good thing for my mother

—at least, if the proceeds are as great as my hopes.

These are the outward incidents of a life full of sentiments, in which you occupy a large space. You know this, do you not?

I have many sorrows just now. Madame de Berny has had so many troubles falling upon her, blow after blow, that she is very ill. She is in the country, and I am *forced* to be in Paris! You can understand all that lies in those few words; there is in them both rind and core. I allow very few people to penetrate to the core.

A thousand tender things to yourself. Kiss Ivan. A grasp of the hand to the Commandant.

To the Duchesse d'Abrantès, Versailles.

Paris: 1834.

I will come and see you in two days hence. Do not sign anything; do not make any engagement regarding your 'Mémoires.'[1] I will tell you some fine things! Do not be frightened about the remainder.[2] Avoid the misfortune of not being free to make the best of your undertaking.

[1] Mame, who had published the first edition of the 'Mémoires de la Duchesse d'Abrantès,' in eighteen volumes, wished to bring one out in twelve volumes.

[2] The still unsold copies of the first edition.

I have not read the article against you; but where and how will you reply to it? You have friends at hand, but just now I say to you, 'Take care!'

A thousand friendly things. On Wednesday, from four to five o'clock, we will talk over everything.

To Madame de Balzac, Chantilly.

End of September, 1834.

My beloved Mother,—Here I am, having reached a good haven. I am working like a horse, and very profitably; but I am made miserable to find I have put you to inconvenience. I did not calculate properly, and I discovered at the moment of my departure that you would want five hundred francs more in order to pay the grocer. Bah! the grocer may wait awhile, although now-a-days *l'épicier soit roi.* I was wise to come here; I am better; almost rested; and since the second day I have recovered all my facility for work; my hosts are all they ever were.

I consider it will take me fully ten days, counting from to-day, to finish the 'Père Goriot' and 'Séraphita,' and to make my corrections for Barbier. If I can give a lift to 'César Birotteau,' to bring it up to the two-thirds, I will do it.

When you or Laura write to Henry, explain

to him that I cannot write many letters, because I spend so much time in *writing* that I have no time left, except to eat and sleep.

I enclose you the letter for Everat.

You will receive in a box which will leave about Thursday (October 2, I think) the manuscript of the 'Père Goriot.' Remember, that it is precious and unique. Ask Madame Everat to lock it up in her cupboard rather than lose it for me: the Ricourt agreement was lost in this way! Anyhow, take all possible precautions: it is a better work than even 'Eugénie Grandet;' at least, I am better pleased with it.

To the Duchesse d'Abrantès, Versailles.

Paris: 1834.

In the name of yourself, I entreat you, do not enter into any engagement with anybody whatsoever; do not make any promise, and say that you have entrusted your business to me on account of my knowledge of business-matters of this kind, and of my unalterable attachment to yourself personally.

I believe I have found what I may call *living money*, seventy thousand healthy francs, and some people, who will jump out of themselves, to dispose

in a short time of 'three thousand D'Abrantès,' as they say in their slang.

Besides, I see daylight for a third and larger edition. If Mamifère does not behave well, say to him, 'My dear sir, M. de Balzac has my business in his charge still, as he had on the day he presented you to me; you must feel he has the priority over the preference you ask for.' This done, wait for me. I shall make you laugh when I tell you what I have concocted.

If Everat appears again, tell him that I have been your attorney for a long time past in these affairs, when they are worth the trouble; one or two volumes are nothing. But twelve or thirteen thousand francs, oh! oh! ah! ah! things must not be endangered. Only manœuvre cleverly, and, with that *finesse* which distinguishes Madame the Ambassadress, endeavour to find out from Mame how many volumes he still has on hand, and see if he will be able to oppose the new edition by slackness of sale or excessive price.

Your entirely devoted.

To M. Hippolyte Lucas, Paris.

Paris: 1834.

Sir,—You seem far too dangerous a rival for me to pay you compliments. I read your pretty novel of the 'Échelle de Soie' with too much pleasure to be without fear.

Accept my uneasy congratulations, and my wishes that you may be an idler! I thank you much for sending me your book.[1]

To Madame de Balzac, Chantilly.

Paris: November, 1834.

My dear good Mother,—Laura tells me you have not been very well. I entreat you to take care of yourself! Nothing is so dear to me as your health! I would give half of myself to keep you well, and I would keep the other half, to do you service. My mother, the day when we shall be all happy through me is coming quickly; I am beginning to gather the fruits of the sacrifices I have made this year for a more certain future. Still, a few months more and I shall be able to give you that happy life—that life without cares or anxiety—which you so much need. You will

[1] *Le Cœur et le Monde.*

have all that you desire; our little vanities will be satisfied no less than the great ambitions of our hearts. Oh, do, I pray you, nurse yourself! If my affairs had permitted me, I should have been at Chantilly; but I must go to England, as you are aware, for Surville and Laura. Besides, I have much to pay this month; but my work will suffice for that.

You have no longer any occasion to torment yourself about me. Keep your mind at ease, and think about yourself; preserve yourself for a happiness which it will be my happiness to offer you.

Now that the end is not so distant, I may speak of it to you. This year you will have two pleasures. On my birthday, I am quite sure I shall owe nothing, except to you; and during the remainder of the year, I hope to attain a still greater result; I hope to be able to amass a capital for you, of which the first good will be, that you will henceforth have a guarantee; and then later . . . you will see! Your comfort in material things, and your happiness are my riches. Oh! my dear mother, do live to see my bright future realised! If you are not better, come again to Paris for another consultation. If I should go to Vienna in January, I would try to have enough

money to take you with me; a journey would perhaps set you up. At any rate, promise me not to put off coming here for a consultation; above all, do not be anxious, do not torment yourself. If you have a fancy for anything, if you want anything, no matter what—tell me, mother, what it is. I may set aside my own whims, but it does not follow that you are not to gratify yours.

Adieu! dear mother; I kiss you, I embrace you with a boundless love. I wish this letter could communicate my health to you, and that my wishes were as strong as my will.

I have also been thinking of Henry's future; I am settling about something, which may be the means of setting him up creditably, but do not say anything to him, I do not wish him to think that he can count upon me.

If there is a 'Revue' at Chantilly, read the number of November 2; you will see that I am thinking of the future of the families of poor literary people; and this time, you know, I have made use of my 'voix de tribune.' Where is my poor father? He would have made his dear little whisper heard on hearing this great and magnificent letter, which is said to give me literary supremacy.

Adieu, again, for all this time is stolen from the manuscripts!

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesie.

Paris: end of November 1834.

Indeed, *cara*, you make me into a bad man and a *grand seigneur*, out of your own head. None of my friends either can or will understand that my work has increased, that I must have eighteen hours a day for work, that I keep out of the way of the 'Garde Nationale,' which would kill me. I am like the painters, I have invented passwords, which are only known to those who really have serious business with me. I, a *grand seigneur*? Then I must have fallen into that class whose incomes are pitilessly fixed and unalterable, and who dare not venture on the smallest indulgence, unlike those Bedouins who dare even live on their capital.

Besides my usual work, I am at present overwhelmed with business, I have to disentangle the tail of a misfortune. Those fifty thousand francs have been devoured like burning straw, and I have still before me fourteen thousand francs of debt; which is as much as the twenty-four thousand that I have already paid, for it is the debt itself, and not the sum more or less which tor-

ments me. I still need six months more to free my pen, as I have freed my purse; and if I still owe something, it is certain that the profits of this year will clear me. For all that, I am still in debt; these fifty thousand francs are an advance on the products of my labour.

I have gone further than you, I have told Auguste not to undertake this journey. He will lose time; he does perceive that in all arts there is a mechanism which must be mastered. In literature, in painting, in music, in sculpture, ten years' labour is needed before a man can understand the synthesis of an art as well as its material analysis. You cannot be a great painter because you have seen landscapes, or men, etc.; one may be able to copy a tree and make it a masterpiece. It would be better for him to struggle for two years with light and shade in a corner, like Rembrandt, who never left his own house, than to run about America, and to come back cruelly disenchanted, as he surely would be, in his political ideas. Your letter has a melancholy tone which grieves me. I am always hoping to be able to come and see you, and to prove that neither time nor circumstance can change Honoré, towards those who have acquired the right to use that name.

It is three years since I have read any newspapers, and I am therefore in holy ignorance of what is said about me; so that I took your good wish about criticism only as a proof of friendship.

Yes, take care of yourself; as to Ivan, you must soon take him out of his present surroundings. To make a man of him, he must be thrown amongst men; he must learn something besides the delights and comforts of home.

I must say good-bye. I hope to be soon able to come and work for a fortnight in peace at Frapesle. Is it not curious that I may perhaps come to finish there the work that I began on my first visit to you, viz. 'César Birotteau'?

Mille amitiés to the Commandant.

Kiss your two lads for me; as for you, you know how much happiness I wish you. I shall consider myself very lucky if I see you at the end of the month; but it is possible that important pecuniary affairs may oblige me to go to England, before I can come to Berry.

God grant I may bring back what I hope! My address has never varied, always 'Madame Veuve Durand, 13 Rue des Batailles.'

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Paris: December 9, 1834.

My dear Laura,—I will lend you every book possible, and everything you wish for, but I cannot conceive how you, who ought to know something of my occupations, can imagine I can guess your wishes. You may ask me for anything without fear of refusal; the only things I cannot lend are the tools I work with. But for all the novels I have you may send and welcome. 'Volupté' I have, but not 'Pellico.' The books I have are very few, only those that are given to me, which are at your service.

I send you much love, but do not scold a brother who is all your own. Affectionate compliments to Surville.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

SP. & H.

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AND PARLIAMENT STREET

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